EXPERIENCING INTERTEXTUALITY
THROUGH AUTHENTIC LITERATURE AND MEANINGFUL WRITING
IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CONTENT AREA CLASSROOM

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by

Lisa Ciecierski

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A dissertation written by

Lisa Ciecierski

B.S., Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, 1994


Ph.D., Kent State University, 2014

Approved by

_________________________________, Co-Director, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
William P. Bintz

_________________________________, Co-Director, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Kristine E. Pytash

_________________________________, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Mark A. Kretovics

Accepted by

_________________________________, Director, School of Teaching,
Alexa L. Sandmann
Learning and Curriculum Studies

_________________________________, Dean, College and Graduate School of
Daniel F. Mahony
Education Health, and Human Services
There may be several potential obstacles that make nourishing active readers and thinkers a challenge and may contribute to passive learning in the content areas. One alternative method of instruction might be engaging students in experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content area classroom.

A mixed methods study with a grounded theory focus was the methodology used to research this phenomenon. Questionnaires, student artifacts, observations, and student and teacher interviews were forms of qualitative data while attitude inventories were collected as quantitative data.

Six themes represent the findings: evolution of content knowledge, learning in the content areas is real and relevant, real literature transforms students to being real readers, the evolution of literate behaviors, development of intertextual thinking, and dispositions. The findings were presented with subthemes so as to guide the reader, add to readability, and paint a complete, vivid description of the phenomenon studied.
Key words: intertextuality, content area literacy, disciplinary literacy, authentic literature, writing
To my family
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Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is
found not in finishing an activity but in doing it.

--Greg Anderson

From the time I was a young girl, I can remember how much I loved to read and to learn. I remember sitting on my great, grand aunt’s lap while she read to me and shared stories. They were magical stories, some true, some about her actual life, and some created with a vivid imagination. My great, grand aunt was a true inspiration to me. She graduated from Edinboro State Normal School in the early 1900s and began her teaching career in a one-room schoolhouse where she shared her love of learning and her love of reading with her students. I wanted to be just like her.

Nearly seventy years after her, I started my journey to become a teacher at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. In this time span, Edinboro had evolved into a university known for its teaching programs. It was my dream to be able to spark and fuel the passion for learning and reading in my students just as my great, grand aunt did for me. It is with my great grand aunt and the professors I learned from at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania that I would like to begin my acknowledgements with, as this is where my initial journey began.

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been by my side, encouraging me to move forward and to not just follow my dreams
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CHAPTER I

DEFINING THE STUDY

*It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.*

--Albert Einstein

Rationale for the Study

Students often enter school with a sense of eagerness to learn, coupled with wonder and natural curiosity; they are already thinking naturally as they question the world around them. However, their eagerness to learn, think, and grow is not always sustained and nourished as they progress through school. According to Firek (2006), it is common for students in middle school and high school to perceive school as being boring and dull as they drift through the days spent in school in a state of passiveness. There may be several obstacles that make nourishing active readers and thinkers a challenge and often contribute to this passive learning.

One obstacle may be that students do not always interact with what they are reading in their content area classroom. Ness (2009) found that students often struggle with literacy as well as the academic tasks placed before them in their content area classrooms. While students might “read” the words on the page, they may not be
interacting with what is written in a manner that lends to making meaning or thinking in a manner that makes what they read theirs. In other words, students might “read” the words, but not at a level encouraging them to think about what they are reading nor in a manner that enhances their thinking and learning. Unfortunately, the way the curriculum is structured in American schools, teachers are not able to spend much needed time to support students to gain a deep understanding of what they are reading (Daniels & Zemelman, 2004; Fordham, Wellman, & Sandmann, 2002; Ness, 2009).

A second obstacle may be that teachers are challenged to move forward so that they “cover” the material written in the curriculum while the actual comprehension of the concepts learned in the classroom is questionable (Fordham, et al., 2002). According to Daniels and Zemelman (2004), American schools have embraced the notion of covering curriculum. This is the practice of teachers teaching as much content area material as possible for any given subject. Thus, content area teachers are often trapped into learning about facts, rather than learning in a manner that makes the subject matter relevant and meaningful for students. This is another factor that may lend to students becoming passive in their learning and has been amplified by high stakes tests.

The pressure of preparing for high stakes tests is the third obstacle that may lead to passive learning that may not require active thinking. Ness (2009) found that teachers felt pressure to cover content for the purpose of high stakes tests rather than providing instruction to help students comprehend what they were reading in the classroom. Evident and wide spread in many schools today, teachers feel an increased pressure to address the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts and for
literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in middle and high schools (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, & Hale, 2010). The Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) push educators to consider that it is no longer just the English teacher’s job to prepare students to read, write, speak, and think critically about complex texts and across such texts. However, this is a conceptual shift that may be difficult to embrace, leading to the fourth obstacle.

The fourth obstacle is that content area teachers do not always embrace the notion that they should be active in the process of guiding students to help prepare to read, write, speak, and think critically in the content area they teach despite what the Common Core State Standards encourage (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, & Hale, 2010). Content area teachers often buy into the common belief that “content is king” (McCoss-Yergian & Krepps, 2010, p. 5). For many, this stems from teachers deciding to teach because of their love for their particular content area and this is what is most important to them. According to McCoss-Yergian & Krepps (2010), teachers do not always view implementing literacy strategies as a means for students to learn or comprehend their content better. Additionally, they share that teachers may not always have confidence to incorporate literacy into their content area.

Being resistant in implementing literacy into the content areas because teachers do not feel they have had the proper training or professional development and therefore do not have the ability to integrate literacy into their content area is yet another obstacle. While many content area teachers exhibit high levels of confidence or efficacy in their
field of expertise, they often do not believe they have significant knowledge, abilities, or preparation for integrating literacy instruction into their content area (McCoss-Yergian & Krepps, 2010). According to Chehayl (2008), teachers who do not have a language arts background are challenged with incorporating reading into their content areas because many of these teachers were not trained in literacy instruction during their pre-service preparation. State certification programs have evolved and many now require pre-service teachers to take some version of a literacy or reading in the content area course (Sheridan-Thomas, 2007). However, for many teachers, this one content area reading course is not enough to provide teachers with the confidence they need. There is a distinct need to improve teachers’ comfort level and knowledge base of content area reading instruction (Alger, 2009; Barry, 2002; Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff & Hougen, 2001; Cantrell, Burns, & Callaway, 2009; Schoenbach & Greenleaf, 2000; Thompson, 2008). This can be done through teacher mentors, teacher coaches, professional development, and college training.

The materials content area teachers often use for instruction is another obstacle and challenge. Historically, content area textbooks have been used for content area instruction. Dating back to the 1700s (McLaughlin, 2010), they are often integral to education and are seen as an element of the physical environment just as the desks, computers, and bulletin boards are (Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, & McKeon, 2009). Although rich in history, there are many challenges teachers face when using textbooks as the centerpiece for instruction. First, many students have a difficult time reading textbooks because they are frequently written with a higher readability level than
the grade level at which they are intended to be used (Alvermann, Swafford, & Montero, 2004). This challenge is amplified because the majority of students in the Nation are reading below grade level (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; The National Report Card, 2013). Second, students often lack the background knowledge they need on a particular topic to successful access the content they are reading. Third, students frequently feel disconnected to the content area material being studied in today’s classrooms when textbooks are the primary source of information shared. Therefore, many students feel textbooks are too difficult, too boring, or both (Ivey, 2002). According to Daniels & Zemelman (2004), textbooks are often superficial, poorly designed, authoritarian in style, and at times inaccurate. These are not the only reasons why using content area textbooks as the sole source of reading material in the content areas may not be the best choice.

In addition to content area textbooks being uninteresting and difficult to read, they are another contributing factor to students thinking in a passive, rather than an active manner because they solicit responses that are primarily efferent. According to Rosenblatt (1938/1995; 1978/1994; 1991), there are two types of responses readers make: efferent and aesthetic. When a reader reads in an efferent manner, they read for the purpose of finding the answer. They read for the “information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out” (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, p. 23). While reading in an efferent manner, the reader often takes a passive stance, as both a reader and as a learner; they are not provided with the opportunity to “live through experience” (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 447). While learning the facts in a content area
classroom is valuable, they should not be learned in a manner that is separated from the learner themselves and is only efferent in nature because this may not encourage students to be active in their thinking and learning and may not be viewed as being meaningful.

In contrast, when students respond aesthetically, they respond in an active manner. According to Rosenblatt (1978/1994) “in aesthetic reading, the reader’s attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (p. 25). This type of response engages the reader actively in the transactional process as they connect to the reading with their own lived experiences. Hence, what they are learning has the potential to be relevant and to be much more than memorizing facts, which may be forgotten soon after a test. Learning with an aesthetic stance could potentially lead students to meaningful learning that is enduring. Students may be more active in their thinking and more knowledgeable in their learning in this stance.

Rosenblatt does not suggest that teachers abandon efferent responses in favor of only aesthetic responses but rather incorporate both efferent and aesthetic responses, moving between both stances, during reading and learning (Rosenblatt, 1999). In combining these two stances, students will be more likely to be active in their thinking and learning.

Although educators have a responsibility to meet state and national standards, they also have a responsibility to develop informed citizens in a democratic society (Fresch & Harkins, 2009). It is also important to create a learning environment that encourages students to think and to be active meaning makers which aligns and extends
from Rosenblatt’s transactional reading theory and encompasses both efferent and aesthetic responses. Students should learn in ways that stretch beyond traditional textbook instruction so they gain the critical skills they will need to succeed in life.

Considering the type of instruction incorporated into many classrooms today, the type of instruction used in the past, as well as the curriculum being taught in schools, may be the first step to begin moving towards this type of instruction and this type of thinking. From this exploration, new avenues to travel may be formulated in an effort to guide students to being successful learners and outstanding citizens. An analysis of what is current in the field helped in determining the statement and significance of the problem.

**Statement and Significance of the Problem**

This literature review presents a historical analysis of content area literacy in the middle school classroom with the purpose of highlighting what is prevalent in the literature when thinking of content area literacy and what is not evident. The search terms of content area literacy, disciplinary literacy, and reading to learn in conjunction with middle school, junior high, upper elementary and intermediate students were used. It is important to emphasize that the articles considered were all based on providing ways to improve instruction. These articles found were empirical, conceptual, practical, and theoretical in nature.

The themes evident in the literature are discussed in detail in chapter two. They are disciplinary literacy, vocabulary and word study, strategy instruction, authentic literature, reading formats, technology, and students with special needs. The purpose of conducting this analysis was to find out what was associated when thinking of the terms
content area literacy or even disciplinary literacy in the middle school classroom.

Although it is recognized that modifying the search terms would solicit different results, the intention of keeping these terms was to see what was evident in the literature using terms that may represent what is being researched when it comes to middle school content area classrooms.

Through this analysis, several conclusions were drawn. First, the literature is dominated by practical, application pieces. This is further exemplified with tables in chapter two. Although not evident in the historical analysis because of the search terms selected, content area literacy and disciplinary literacy is dominated by research in secondary schools. Second, scholarly articles addressing writing in the content areas were minimal using the search terms that were decided upon. The same can be said for intertextuality. This indicates a gap in the literature, specifically when considering intertextuality, authentic literature, and writing in middle school content area classrooms.

Since minimal research was found on intertextuality and writing within the historical analysis on content area literacy, the literature for these two areas was researched and is presented separately. Authentic literature in the content areas was included in the historical analysis but is expanded upon later in the chapter because it was an integral part of the study and additional literature was found to what was presented directly connected to the content areas.

Even though there is research on these topics, again there are gaps in this research. First, there is a gap in the research when focusing on middle school students. Much of the research on intertextuality involves elementary students, while the research
on writing-to-learn and public writing focuses on secondary students. Second, there are many practical application pieces evident in the literature but not as many that are empirical in nature. Third, much of the research is isolated in one specific subject area, which may support the notion of disciplinary literacy which focuses on providing skills for students to utilize in one specific content area by the specific teacher of that content area rather than interdisciplinary instruction, integrating multiple subjects at a time.

While disciplinary literacy is certainly valuable as a specific content area teacher teaching strategies and practices directly related to one specific discipline, the processes individuals undergo to make intertextual connections in one content area are very similar to the processes they would undergo in a completely different subject. However, these intertextual connections could be made using discipline specific resources. Finally, there was not research found that combined these entities together: intertextuality, authentic literature, writing, and the middle school content area classroom.

This thinking, the research in the field, and the results of two pilot studies led to the research topic, “Experiencing Intertextuality through Authentic Literature and Meaningful Writing in Middle School Content Area Classrooms.” Experiencing intertextual connections with authentic literature and meaningful writing may provide a “way-in” (Bintz, 2011, p. 34) to the curriculum that would not otherwise be present. This may address the passiveness discussed by Firek (2006) and may lead to a more active and engaging environment where students can read, write, think, and learn at extended levels.
Research Questions

The exploration of the participants experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in middle school content area classrooms addressed the following research questions:

1) What happens when students learn content area material while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?

2) What literate behaviors do students engage in while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?

3) How are students’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning influenced while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas?

Herring (2011) suggests replacing research questions with areas of exploration. In his study on environments and transferring information literacy practices, he did not set out to find answers to specific questions but instead set out to explore areas relevant to the topic in which he was interested. This research design differs from Herring in that it is a mixed methods study; however, the notion of exploring areas relevant to the topic was kept in mind while creating research questions. The research questions were composed so they would serve as a tool to guide the study. They were meant to provide guidance to the research without stifling the study.

The first research question, “What happens when students learn content area material while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?” deals with exploring the content students learned in their content area subjects.
For example, if the topic being studied was the Civil Rights Movement, the goal of this question was to find out how students learned this content area material. Would students have a vast knowledge base after learning in an intertextual way? Would students have a deep, conceptual understanding of the content being studied? Would they be able to connect to the content they are studying in ways they had not connected before? Would students be able to demonstrate their understanding of the content being studied through their writing?

The second question, “What literate behaviors do students engage in while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?” deals specifically with the area of literacy. The goal of this question was to find out if exploring intertextuality in this manner will have any influence on students in the area of literacy. For example, would students be able to make inferences with greater ease? Would these inferences reflect deep thinking and reach below the surface? Would students be able to demonstrate their understanding of intertextual connections after reading various forms of authentic literature? Would students’ abilities to express themselves both verbally and in writing grow as they learn in intertextual ways?

The third question, “How are students’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning influenced while they experience intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content area classroom?” focused on students’ attitudes throughout the study. The goal of this question was to learn if students’ attitudes would change with this type of instruction.
These questions were created to guide the study and are broad in nature with the purpose of not stifling my inquiry. The work of many scholars helped address my research questions. First, the work of Louise Rosenblatt guided my inquiry because I solicited varying types of responses from students, both efferent and aesthetic in nature. Acknowledging and soliciting these types of responses from students throughout this study had potential to influence student learning.

Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is a theory of mind that recognizes central social relationships and how students can learn through them. According to Vygotsky (1981), the challenge is to “show how the individual response emerges from the forms of collective life” (p. 165). Vygotsky (1978) believed every function in a child’s cultural development appeared first on a social level and then on an individual level. Being active and social in learning is a necessary component for students to gain ownership of the content and concepts being taught. By personally connecting with concepts and content, learning becomes real and relevant. My research questions and study were formulated and conducted using this theory as a conceptual framework.

The research questions were also guided by pilot studies I conducted previously and were used as a basis for further exploration into experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas.

**Definition of Terms**

*Authentic Literature:* real, genuine literature which may take the form of trade books such as chapter books or picture books both fiction and nonfiction in nature.
Complementary Texts: texts that are connected by theme with the purpose of enhancing and supporting a topic.

Conflicting Texts: texts that are connected in a way that provide multiple perspectives on a specific topic.

Content Areas: the subjects of reading, writing, social studies, math, and science.

Controlling Texts: texts that are arranged so one text serves as the cornerstone book, or the central book for instruction. Other books are chosen that connect with the cornerstone book.

Creative Writing: writing that is typically fiction in nature and that goes beyond traditional academic or technical writing.

Intertextuality: the connections made with past readings, prior ideas, and previous literary experiences to construct an evolving text (Chi, 2012).

Meaningful writing: writing that stretches beyond short answer responses and fill-in-the-blank answers on assessments and copying notes off of the board and includes both write-to-learn experiences as well as public writing experiences.

Middle School Age Students: students in fifth through eighth grade.

Paired texts: two texts, often times one fiction and nonfiction, that are focused on the same topic (Camp, 2000; 2006). Often times used synonymously with the term twin texts.

Picture books: a book that is on average 32 pages in length and contains illustrations on every page or every page spread. The pictures and the text have a symbiotic
relationship meaning they have an interdependent relationship or depend on each other to communicate meaning.

*Public writing:* formal writing experiences that are substantial in length and are often composed as students travel through the writing process. These types of writing are usually graded.

*Synoptic texts:* texts that are connected in a way that highlights variations or versions of a single story or event.

*Tri-texts:* three texts, focusing on the same topic or theme that are intertextually connected.

*Twin texts:* two texts, often times one fiction and nonfiction, focused on the same topic (Camp, 2000; 2006). Often times used synonymously with the term *paired texts.*

*Write-to-learn experiences:* informal writing experiences that are short in length and used as a way to further students’ learning and give them opportunities to make their thinking visible. These types of writing are usually not graded.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

We only think when we are confronted with problems.

--John Dewey

In this review of literature related to the study, literacy as a sociocultural practice is discussed. Within this theory, how literacy may be viewed from a sociocultural perspective is addressed. Next, a historical analysis of content area literacy is presented. This historical analysis spans from 1919 to the present. To continue, literature is reviewed from the components that encompass this study: intertextuality, authentic literature, and writing in the content areas, specifically creative writing and writing to learn.

**Literacy as a Sociocultural Practice**

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory undergirds the psychological foundations of content area literacy in the middle school. In middle level education, there is a strong need for an understanding of the student as a whole, as someone who occupies and creates an entire world (Stevenson, 2002; Vatterott, 2007). Artifacts of learning can be discussed in a useful manner as practical and conceptual tools. Both can help students
construct content knowledge and build conceptual understanding of the learning process itself (Clayton & Ardito, 2009).

Lantolf (1994) explains Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory as a theory of mind that recognizes the central role social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts play in organizing human forms of thinking. According to Vygotsky (1981), the challenge is to show how the individual response emerges from the forms of collective life.

Vygotsky’s theory is one of the foundations of constructivism and asserts three major themes. The first deals with social interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978), social learning precedes development. Vygotsky believed that every function in the child’s cultural development appeared twice. The first time is between people and the inside child. It occurs on a social level and is considered the social plane. The social plane is where cultural development appears between people as an interpsychological category. The second appearance is the psychological plane and occurs within the child as an intrapsychological category.

The second theme deals with the level of knowledge possessed by those involved in the learning process. Termed as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), it refers to those who have a better understanding or higher ability than the learner in regards to a specific task, process, or concept. The More Knowledgeable Other is often times a coach, adult, or teacher but can also be peers or computers.

The final theme is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This is the distance between the student’s ability to perform a task with guidance and the student’s independent ability. As the learning progresses, the distance between these two should
become smaller and smaller. The learner should become more independent as time progresses.

Related to the sociocultural theory is social constructivism. Social constructivism is the mental activity inextricably bound to its social context (Wertsch, 1991). According to Mallory and New (1994), learners play an active role in their own development in constructivism. In classrooms that honor a social constructivist theory, students are active meaning makers. With the teacher and fellow students, they work together to “construct” meaning of the material they are learning.

In Freire’s “Banking Model” (2000) of education, teachers view the students, often times subconsciously, as empty containers who must be filled with knowledge. The learner is not an active recipient of knowledge but rather passive as the knowledge is passed onto them. Vacca, Vacca, and Mraz (2011) describe a concept similar to Freire’s Banking Model and call it “assign-and-tell” (p. 5). Another form of passive learning, students are assigned a text to read only to be told what the material was about by the teacher through lecture and question and answer routines. Assign-and-tell dampens active involvement in learning and denies students ownership of and responsibility for the acquisition of content. According to Vacca, et al., (2011), “teachers place themselves, either by design or by circumstance, in the unenviable position of being the most active participants during classroom interactions with students” (p. 6). Vygotsky’s theory is a sharp contrast to both the banking model of instruction as well as the assign-and-tell model. His theory promotes students as meaning makers who play an active role in their learning. Collaboration, reflection, and varying types of instruction, learning and
assessment are evident. Learning is a reciprocal experience with both students and teachers as active participants.

Evidence of both types of instruction can be found when historically analyzing content area literacy. However, this historical analysis only presents empirical, conceptual, and practical publications highlighting various ways to support students in literacy in the content areas.

**Content Area Literacy**

The specialty of content area reading instruction came about in recognition of the fact that readers require various strategies when they study particular subject areas and read many kinds of materials for many purposes. Content area reading instruction is designed to deliver those strategies. (Moore, Readance, & Rickelman, 1983)

Discussion of content area reading instruction began many years before the term “content area reading” became prominent in the 1970s. William S. Gray published two monographs on content area reading as well as several essays on the research he conducted. In an early paper presented to the National Education Association, Gray (1919) challenged educators to channel their attention on the specific reading skills necessary for successful study. Throughout his reports, he included separate attention to content area reading studies. In Gray’s (1927) second annual summary of reading research he reported, “Reading as it relates to the various school subjects and activities is now challenging some of the attention that it has long deserved” (p. 464). Nearly one
hundred years ago, there was urgency for reading to be considered in the content areas and this urgency was believed to be long overdue.

Gray’s work influences content area instruction of today. The popular slogan, “every teacher is a teacher of reading” can be traced back to Gray. It evolved from the second report issued by the National Committee on Reading, again chaired by Gray. Published in the 36th NSEE Yearbook (Whipple, 1937), the report formalized all teachers should include reading instruction into their curriculum. The notion of content area reading extends this idea.

The term “content reading” became prominent upon publication of Herber’s (1970) book, “Teaching Reading in the Content Areas.” In this book, Herber differentiated between literacy development as reading instruction and literacy development to support subject matter learning (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Grady, 2002; Ruddell, 2005). The primary difference is that literacy development as reading instruction focuses on the skills needed to learn to read while the literacy development to support subject matter learning focuses on reading to learn and what skills are needed to do so. Following this publication, work based on developments in cognitive psychology provided insight into a reader’s schema, or background knowledge of a topic, and the reader’s ability to comprehend the text they are reading that addresses the topic (Grady, 2002). The focus of the work done in content area literacy during the time of Herber and even during the time of Gray’s work, focused on secondary students.

While there is a rich history of content area literacy, analyzing the types of literacy instruction specifically taught in content area classrooms allowed for finding
gaps. Therefore, research questions and study design could be created in an attempt to lend to the field. Recognizing this rich history first, also led to defining the search terms to review the literature present in the field.

The research reviewed for this study is based on a review of literature in scholarly journals. Searches including key words of content area literacy, disciplinary literacy, and reading to learn in conjunction with middle school, junior high, upper elementary and intermediate students yielded several results (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Scholarly Journal Initial Search Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Term</th>
<th>Content Area Literacy</th>
<th>Disciplinary Literacy</th>
<th>Read to Learn</th>
<th>Reading in the Content Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Elementary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 illustrates the majority of the peer-reviewed scholarly articles found using “middle school” as one of the search terms. These results were those solicited when using the search terms indicated. After running each search, the results were analyzed to see if there were any publications that were repeated in another search. Articles that
appeared in multiple searches were included under the first category represented in the table.

Next, the scholarly articles were analyzed to see if they met additional criteria. To be accepted, each article had to meet three requirements. First, the article had to encompass content area literacy or disciplinary literacy. Second, it had to focus on ways of improving instruction. Third, it had to explicitly address middle school age students. While there were articles addressing professional development, pre-service teachers, and articles sharing challenges educators felt in incorporating content area literacy into instruction, these articles were not included because there was no evidence of actually interacting with middle school age students. Table 2 shows the results for this additional analysis.

Table 2

*Scholarly Journal Search Results from Additional Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Term</th>
<th>Content Area Literacy</th>
<th>Disciplinary Literacy</th>
<th>Read to Learn</th>
<th>Reading in the Content Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Elementary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In viewing Table 2, much of the research used for the literature review was found when using the search term “middle school.” Middle schools were first created in the 1960s and have grown in popularity since (Powell, 2010) suggesting that the majority of articles written about integrating literacy into the content areas were those most recently written. This is not surprising because over the past 30 years, much research has been conducted on how young adolescents learn best (Association for Middle Level Education, 2011).

Articles meeting the parameters, led to further readings in book chapters, handbooks, journals, and yearbooks. After the artifacts were read to determine if they met the established parameters, they were arranged chronologically, catalogued in a sequential chart documenting themes, and then read again in greater detail to depict trends and themes.

The following themes were identified: disciplinary literacy, vocabulary and word study, strategy instruction, authentic literature, reading formats, technology, and students with special needs. Research for each of the seven themes is presented in the following sections.

**Disciplinary Literacy**

Moving from the popular saying of Gray, “every teacher is a teacher of reading,” researchers (McConachie, Hall, Resnick, Ravi, Bill, Bintz, & Taylor., 2006; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) share the concept of disciplinary literacy. According to Snow and Moje (2010, p. 67), “the comprehension skills taught in English class are useful throughout the school day, but they aren’t sufficient to help students study math, science, history, or
literature.” More specific instruction focusing on the specific disciplines is a necessary component of effective instruction because generic strategy instruction is not enough. This specific instruction may focus on the vocabulary specific to the discipline, the reading processes and types of reading for each discipline, as well as the thinking required in each discipline.

The thinking that occurs in science may be different than the thinking that occurs in math, social studies, language arts, or English. Therefore, disciplinary literacy posits that “students can develop deep, conceptual knowledge in a discipline only when they use the habits of reading, writing, speaking, and thinking which the specific discipline values and uses (McConachie, et.al., 2006, p. 8) and thus instruction should be formed accordingly.

Tovani (2004) reaffirms this idea when sharing her belief that since content area teachers are experts in the field, they are best equipped to show students how to read texts unique to their subjects, and therefore, should enlist in content area reading instruction. Tovani emphasizes the importance of the specific text structures and vocabulary of the content are essential for comprehension.

To support the beliefs, a disciplinary framework was introduced by the Institute from Learning at the University of Pittsburgh in 2002. This framework is grounded in five principals for designing inquiry-based instruction that is rigorous and integrates academic content and discipline-appropriate habits of thinking: (1) knowledge and thinking go hand in hand; (2) learning is apprenticeship; (3) teachers mentor students; (4) instruction and assessment drive each other; and (5) classroom culture socializes
intelligence. In their article, “Task, Text, and Talk: Literacy for All Subjects,”
McConachie, et al. (2006), share information about each of the principals as well as
stories that show that content knowledge and literacy development can go hand in hand.

Wilson (2008) extends the notion of different subject area text written in different
formats. Explicit instruction to teach students how to read these different types of text is
important. An example of science is given as a model. Wilson discusses how science
varies from other subject areas when she states (2008),

science inherently requires the use of these multiple sign systems,

scientific literacy accordingly involves the comprehension of

multimodal texts, or texts that convey meaning through multiple

sign systems such as gestures, words, written words, numeric equations,

photographs, diagrams, and so forth. (p. 154)

In order for students to comprehend this unique text, they must be taught how to do so.
In this case, since science teachers are most familiar with this type of reading because it
is characteristic of the subject they teach, they are the most obvious choice to provide this
instruction.

Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) shared preliminary findings from data collected
from the first two years of their study. This study was conducted in an attempt to move
past historically frustrated content-area teachers. The results revealed how content
experts and secondary content teachers read disciplinary texts as well as how they make
use of comprehension strategies and teach those strategies to their students. Their
findings suggested that disciplinary experts read the texts from their disciplines
differently; hence, they recommend different comprehension strategies to guide students to reading and learning successfully. This study also included secondary students. While it was the only empirical piece of literature found on disciplinary literacy involving middle school students, it was not the only empirical publication that connected to content area literacy in middle schools.

**Vocabulary, Word Study, and Comprehension**

Vocabulary and word study are integral components in comprehending material read in the content areas. Wood, Harmon, and Taylor (2011), address the importance of vocabulary to comprehension. They suggest that “comprehending texts is critical to achievement in all content areas” (p. 57) and invite educators to view vocabulary instruction in a different light than the way it is traditionally taught.

Traditionally when teachers teach vocabulary, they assign words, have students define the words, and then test students on how well they memorized the words and their meaning. Teachers might even have students put the words in a sentence. This practice does not appear to have significant impact on students’ word knowledge and language use and does not improve comprehension of the text including these words (Baumann & Kammeanui, 1991) nor does the practice of simply defining words from the dictionary (Nist & Olejnic, 1995). In addition, this type of learning is contradictory to what John Dewey (1910) suggested when writing about the importance of vocabulary. He felt that a word was an instrument for thinking about the meaning in which it expresses.

A common example of vocabulary instruction is shared by Flanigan and Greenwood (2007) with an observation they made in a seventh grade civics class. The
teacher introduced the vocabulary words for the weekly chapter, wrote the six terms on
the board, had students look the definitions up in the glossary located in the back of the
textbook, and record the definition in their notebooks. The teacher then asked students
questions which were met with a small number of students participating by answering the
questions, often times in a superficial manner and without enthusiasm. After the lesson,
the teacher shared that he knew the students weren’t really learning the words and would
not remember the words and their definitions even hours after the lesson. He also shared
that the only words the students would remember are those that keep coming up and are
learned because of this repetition.

Even though teachers know the way they traditionally teach comprehension does
not bring about the depth of understanding needed to support content area teachers, there
is a dilemma in what methods would be most effective (Allen, 2002). As the teacher
above indicates, when students interact with words repeatedly, they are more likely to
remember them. There are several methods of learning vocabulary that have been
considered as being successful. The literature in the field is predominately laced with
practical articles sharing various methods.

These methods indicate students need to be able to make meaning and interact
with the words they are studying before they will commit them to memory and
potentially use them again in the future (Allen, 2002; Bintz, 2011; Flanigan &

Methods also suggest stretching beyond mere memorization and designing
vocabulary instruction that involves multiple senses. Learning vocabulary involves
seeing, hearing, and using words in meaningful contexts (Daniels & Zemelman, 2004). The Standards for English Language Arts (National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association, 1996), voice that the connection between comprehension and vocabulary is multidimensional and involves the use of all aspects of literacy: listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing visually.

Wood, et al., (2011) recommend a strategy called *pick a word – not just any word* to engage students in multidimensional word study while they chose their own words as one of the instructional guidelines for promoting vocabulary literacy. This strategy provided support for student choice and gave students the opportunity for student self-selection, peer interaction and discussion, and creation of a final multimedia presentation by student groups.

Numerous strategies and organizers can be employed to meet the challenge of interacting with words in meaningful ways (Allen 2002; Bintz, 2011; Hopkins & Bean, 1998/1999; Linder, 2007). Teachers often face a challenge when utilizing content area materials to determine which words are most important for students to learn to support them in accessing the topics being studied. Immersing students in word study in meaningful contexts becomes next to impossible considering the number of words that are suggested.

According to Flanigan and Greenwood (2007), “all words are not created equal,” (p. 227). Consequently, words may be organized and categorized for teaching (Allen, 2002; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Flanigan & Greenwood, 2007; Graves, 1984; Graves & Prenn, 1986; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Sorting words into various levels, gives the
teacher the opportunity to focus on the words most important to the content being studied, interact meaningfully with those words most important, and preserve precious time.

Explicitly stated by Alvermann and Moore (1991) but inferred throughout the literature is the sociocultural and social constructivist theory. If the goal is for students to own words, to have a deep understanding of words determined to be important, and potentially use these words in the future, then students must be actively engaged in interacting with these words.

Reading plays an important part in vocabulary development. According to Bintz (2011), “students learn vocabulary best in classrooms in which teachers read to them and highlight important and interesting words” (p. 46). They learn best when the teacher provides instruction that helps them see the relevance and the value of word study and allows them to study important words from the texts they read in the classroom.

Linder (2007) utilized a study conducted by Beck and McKeown (2001) and Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002, 2003) to adapt the Text Talk strategy for her seventh grade students. According to Linder (2007), “by using Text Talk with picture books, middle school students can be exposed to a type of text they might not select for their own reading purposes, increasing the breadth and depth of their reading and exposing them to more concepts and vocabulary words” (p. 6). Linder (2007) deviated from the original Text Talk format that used explicit instruction focusing on vocabulary and instead provided student-friendly definitions before reading the picture book. She felt that she was establishing a purpose for reading the picture book by choosing to do this.
While the book was read, the students watched and listened for information relating to the vocabulary words. This gave them the opportunity to use the title and the vocabulary words to make predictions to what might happen in the story.

The Text Talk strategy is not the only vocabulary strategy that can be used with picture books to build vocabulary. While the Story Impression strategy (McGinley & Denner, 1987) is primarily used with fiction, the Text Impression strategy (Bintz, 2011), is used mostly with nonfiction. Both arouse students’ curiosity as they utilize words used as clues to write their own version of the story before reading and then monitor their prediction to gage their accuracy while reading. Taking time in class for storybook readings and interacting talk plays a significant role in improving vocabulary (Dickinson & Smith, 1994).

There is not a “one-size fits all” way of teaching vocabulary. A variety of techniques and practices that may be employed in the classroom and are evident in publications which are practical in nature. Teachers may reflect on these as options to strengthen students’ vocabulary and as one approach to strengthening students’ comprehension in the content areas.

**Strategy Instruction**

According to Harris and Hodges (1995), a strategy is a “systematic plan, consciously adapted and monitored to improve one’s performance in learning” (p. 244). In the early 1900s, strategy instruction was used to help students become independent learners. McMurry (1909) claimed there were eight factors that were essential in studying successfully: setting the specific purpose, supplementing information,
organizing ideas, judging the worth of statements, memorizing, using ideas, maintaining a tentative attitude, and relying on self-directed learning. These factors are evident in many of the reading strategies developed throughout the years.

Some of the strategies from years ago are still prevalent in middle school classrooms today. An example is the well-known SQ3R strategy: Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review originated by Robinson (1946). Pressley (1998) suggests strategies like constructing images, summarizing, questioning, analyzing text structure, thinking aloud, predicting, and clarifying as those that “can promote reading instruction beginning in grade 2 and continuing into high school” (p. 216). While the SQ3R strategy and others have long histories, many newer strategies have been introduced through practical pieces and are evident throughout instruction.

Strategy instruction, specifically in middle school content area classrooms, became prevalent in the year 2000. According to Snow and Moje (2010), “effective practices incorporate knowledge of how adolescents learn to read, write, and use literacy to learn, and how students’ cultural, social, psychological, and linguistic development might shape how, why, and when they read and write” (p. 66). This notion connects with the sociocultural theory because all dimensions of the student feed into the student being a successful reader and writer.

Just as Snow and Moje (2010) suggest, the interaction of the dimensions of literacy instruction were acknowledged with the development of the Reading Apprenticeship Model. A text-based inquiry stance is at the heart of this model developed by Schoenbach, Greenleaf, and Hale (2010). Reading Apprenticeship
leverages four interacting dimensions of classroom life to support reading development and written response to reading: social, personal, cognitive, and knowledge building” (Schoenbach, et al., 2010, p. 40). Woven into subject matter teaching through metacognitive conversations, the four dimensions provide avenues to make sense of what has been read through the conversations students have voicing the difficulties they have and making sense of the materials they are interacting with.

While strategy instruction has been found to be effective, it is more complex than teaching a set of isolated generic reading comprehension strategies such as summarizing or questioning (Schoenbach, et al., 2010). Strategy instruction is not effective if students are not given clear and meaningful purpose. It is much more than choosing a strategy because it might be fun or engaging. The goal of utilizing reading strategies must reach beyond simple pleasure and must set the purpose of being used independently to interact with text in a way that supports successful comprehension.

Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (1978) illustrates the goal of strategy instruction and strategy use. The strategy should provide the scaffolding the students need to be successful in the topic being explored but with the intent of being able to repeat this action independently in the future. Initially, teachers may model the instructional strategy for students. Teachers may even verbalize their thinking and their actions for students. Next, students may practice the strategy in a small group with a partner or in a small group. The idea is that during this middle stage, the student is still receiving support. Ideally, in the next stage, the student would utilize the strategy
independently in a successful manner. The end goal is that students will utilize the strategies, on their own, to become proficient readers.

Proficient readers constantly question themselves and the text while they read. Middle school students reading in the content areas should also be doing this. This is a situation where teachers may consider utilizing a “think aloud” to show students the process they go through when questioning the text. When teachers verbalize their own thinking and questioning processes while reading content area text aloud, they model this practice for their students. This type of demonstration gives teachers the opportunity to lend their cognitive expertise to students (Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube, 2001). It is important when participating in the practice of modeling questioning of the text that the teacher makes sure to address a variety of all thinking levels: “literal, inferential, and applied” (Fordham, 2006, p. 392) because a variety of thinking levels are needed to be a successful reader. This is true with all types of texts.

There are many strategies that may be taught to aid students in reading expository text successfully (Miller & Veatch, 2010). One of the challenges for teachers is knowing which instructional strategy is best for the text being read. When planning instruction, teachers must make sure they have a clear and focused purpose. This will help them in choosing the instructional techniques and strategies most beneficial for their students. Teaching students to have a clear purpose in their reading will help them choose which reading strategy will best help them read proficiently.

It is not only the strategies that matter. While the literature is dominated with practical pieces suggesting many valuable strategies that can be used to enhance
instruction in the content areas, two other considerations are important and are evident in the literature. First, is the thinking students do when interacting with the strategies. Loranger (1999) wrote about results of a case study conducted in a sixth grade classroom and opens with a quote from the classroom teacher who says, “don’t ask me if you are right or wrong, tell me what you think about it” (p. 239). John’s quote brings to the forefront the importance of students being active in their thinking process and the importance of remembering this when working with students with various instructional strategies. Loranger’s case study found that as John, the teacher, worked diligently to connect theory and practice and demonstrate this connection in his instruction, he was able to teach students many beneficial strategies to use in his science classroom. As students had the opportunity to take a content area literacy class in their middle school, focusing on a different subject area each quarter, they learned the importance of these strategies and how they could be applied in various reading strategies. They also learned about the thinking related to the strategies and how this thinking was the same in some instances and different in others.

Being an active thinker and being cognizant of this as well as monitoring the success of reading was an important attribute found while studying how a middle school science teacher implemented a strategy called PLAN (Radcliff, Caverly, & Peterson, 2004). PLAN is a reading approach used specifically while reading content area textbooks. It uses four strategies through student-centered mapping. Findings from the study indicated that the teacher moved past mere strategy awareness to understanding and actual adaptation to make sure that student learning was his focus. Hence, the students’
perception of their reading and thinking also changed. They became much more aware of the need to be active in their reading and how thinking about this increased their learning.

Modeling thinking and practice for students is one way of guiding students to using these practices on their own. Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2008) conducted a study to research how teachers used shared reading and what patterns emerged in their application of shared reading as an instructional strategy. This study involved 25 teachers representing 25 schools who were randomly selected for participation. The teachers were observed as they conducted a shared reading and think-aloud with their students and were also interviewed informally. Four major areas of instruction were identified for shared reading in the content areas: comprehension, vocabulary, text structures, and text features. These major areas were conducted in the order of frequency as presented. Most prevalent in the study was the use of shared reading to teach comprehension strategies. To do this, many teachers either obtained multiple copies of the book being used, photocopied the section students were to use for the shared reading experience, or projected the text so all students could see. The purpose of the shared reading was for the teacher to share his or her thinking in a think-aloud format to model their own thought processes. Although students were not asked questions in a question/answer format, they were encouraged on multiple occasions to talk with a partner, write a reflection, indicate an agreement with some type of hand signal, or ask questions. As with strategy instruction, students were then to apply the thinking processes that had been modeled for them to their own reading.
Combining strategy instruction with thinking instruction proved to be valuable in these three studies. However, the empirical literature on strategy instruction as well as the empirical literature connecting strategy instruction with thinking was minimal, suggesting a need for more research of this nature in the future.

**Authentic Literature in the Content Areas**

Much research suggests educators should consider other means for instruction besides the textbook in the content areas. Picture books (Albright, 2002; Murphy, 2009), young adult literature (Bean, 2003), nonfiction trade books (Palmer & Stewart, 1997), and other forms of authentic literature (Bintz, 2011; Chehayl, 2008) are those evident in the literature. Various types of authentic literature and the research surrounding authentic literature, will be discussed in more detail later in Chapter 2 since this was an area pertinent to the research questions posed for this study.

Particularly applicable with authentic literature in the content areas is the concept of “way-in” books. “Way-in” books (Bintz, 2001; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997) might be used to encourage exploration in the middle grades classroom. “Way-in books are high-quality, often award-winning texts that provide students a ‘way-in’ – an unexpected entry into a world of topics they might find interesting to explore” (Bintz, 2011, pp. 34 – 35). Bintz proposes using these books as tools for exploration to give students a way to inquire as well as an opportunity to pose questions, and arouse curiosities. Bintz continues to offer suggestions of text sets that can be used as “way-in” books across the curriculum and for a variety of themes and topics. Upon analysis, it can be concluded
that the books presented by Bintz are high quality picture books, which can be used with middle school students.

**Reading Formats**

Alternative ways of reading are evident in the literature. In the area of content area reading instruction in the middle school read-alouds (Albright, 2002; Albright & Ariail, 2005; Bean, 2003; Ivey, 2003; McCormick & McTigue, 2011) and literature circles (Day & Kroon, 2010; Thompson, 2008; Wilfong, 2009, 2012; Wood, Pilonieta, & Blanton, 2009) are methods utilized.

**Read alouds.** Allen (2000) discusses the factor of enjoyment in reading and how middle and secondary teachers who build read aloud time into their daily schedule can attest to the fact that no one is too old to enjoy read-aloud time. This concept was reaffirmed by Ivey and Broaddus (2001) who surveyed over 1,700 sixth graders asking students about their best reading experiences in school and learned that 62% of the students surveyed indicated a preference for teacher read-alouds. Although this practice is often evident in literacy classes, there is great value in the content areas, as well because of the benefits reading aloud holds.

According to Alvermann and Phelps (1998), the advantages to reading aloud to students in content areas are many. Teachers may use short read-alouds to develop interest and motivation, introduce new topics, illustrate practical applications of content-area concepts, and even to include humor in the classroom. In addition, reading aloud to students naturally leads to conversation. These conversations engage students and enhance their learning. Discussion gives students the opportunity to transcend the
information they have encountered in the text and puts them in a better position to transform knowledge and make it their own (Vacca et al., 2011).

According to Ivey (2003), “when teachers read to students, they enhance students’ understanding and their inclination to read independently” (p. 812). Reading aloud gives students ideas for books they would like to read on their own. Ivey (1999) found that when students are given a choice, they read more willingly because of the opportunity for choice and often choose a wide variety of texts. Reading aloud is just one way of exposing students to a wide range of books that they may choose to read on their own in the future. Therefore, reading aloud might be a way to begin self-reading to give students ideas for future reading selections.

Palumbo and Sanacore (2010), share that students should “enjoy reading as a lifetime activity” (p. 180). This is important in literacy classes and also in content area classes. They show how a content area teacher may use a read aloud to engage students in the topic being studied before giving them the opportunity to choose their own books for independent reading, also centered on the topic. Therefore, using the read aloud to engage students in a topic is an additional reason content area teachers may consider utilizing the read aloud in their classroom.

McCormick and McTigue (2011) recommend using teacher read-alouds as a means to scaffold the students understanding of the content being studied. This is especially effective for struggling readers who are often initially intimidated and frustrated by texts traditionally used in the content areas. McCormick and McTigue share a teacher’s recollection of using a picture book as a read-aloud. The teacher states, “I
couldn’t believe it. Students who cannot sit still to even hear a set of directions were listening so intently with wide eyes and asking questions about the turtle” (p. 45). Therefore, the benefit of being able to deconstruct otherwise difficult texts through the support of a read aloud is a benefit.

Another benefit of reading aloud to middle school students is reading aloud gives teachers an opportunity to model the type of thinking they partake in to be a successful reader which is particularly important in content area classrooms (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2010). Engaging students in the processes employed such as making predictions, asking questions, hypothesizing and predicting, relating the information to personal experiences, and monitoring comprehension helps students think about the text and tips them off to what successful readers do to be successful.

Albright and Ariail (2005) conducted a study where they surveyed 141 middle school teachers on the practice of reading aloud in the classroom. A large percentage of teachers (85.8%) reported reading aloud to their students; many were content area teachers. When asked why teachers read aloud to their students, sixteen different reasons were given. Among the most popular was modeling of specific strategies and behaviors. Teachers indicated they read aloud to model fluent reading such as pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and style. Evidence of reading aloud to model successful thought processes was not indicated. Less than 25% of respondents indicated that they read picture books, magazines or newspapers to their students. Chapter books and textbooks were the most commonly read aloud; however, picture books are also an important consideration.
Albright (2002) recommends using picture books for read-alouds in the content areas as a means to “engage adolescents, enrich content knowledge, and stimulate higher order thinking” (p. 418). Because the pictures and the text work together to tell a story, picture books as read-alouds make valuable instructional tools in providing in engaging students and stimulating their interest in the topic being studied.

Bean (2003) also recommends reading aloud to students as a way to enhance content area instruction as well as engaging students in self-selected reading. However, Bean proposes reading aloud young-adult literature. Using young-adult literature in the content area aids students in making connections across various texts including fiction, nonfiction, and media. Similar to using picture books, young-adult literature provides opportunities for class discussion. Students are often able to respond from an aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1978) when using young-adult literature in the content areas. Because students often feel disconnected from the topics they study in the content areas, being able to focus on their thoughts, ideas, and feelings from what they are reading is not a practice that occurs routinely. Consequently, students share efferent responses where they focus on the information they remember from their reading. When using picture books and young-adult literature in the content areas, the opportunities for both types of responses becomes greater.

In conclusion, both practical and empirical literature was presented. These publications suggest reading aloud to students to build interest as well as an instructional tool. Various reading materials may be used to read aloud to students as also was
indicated. Some of these same characteristics can also be found while implementing literature circles into the content area classroom.

**Literature circles.** According to Noe and Johnson (1999), literature circles are described as a venue for small groups of students to gather together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. Students guide the discussion in response to what they have read; collaboration is at the heart of this approach. Students reshape and add to their understanding as they construct meaning with other readers. Daniels (2002) cautions that there are many divergent ingredients to literature circles, and they can be termed with numerous names such as literature studies, book clubs, literature discussion groups, and cooperative book discussion groups. There are also variations that may be employed, especially in the content area classroom.

Wood et al. (2009), propose the use of what they call integrated literacy circles as a discussion-based approach to teach and learn content area concepts while also acquiring basic reading skills. They can be used to teach and reinforce students’ understanding on many literacy skills and tasks including summarizing, skimming for main ideas, predicting, text structure, critical analysis, sequencing, and inferring. It is a way for students to learn, apply, organize, and coordinate the skills and strategies needed for proficient reading. Rather than structuring the “circles” around various books, the groups meet for a particular instructional purpose. The circle concept provides an avenue for teachers to engage students in discussion about the topic and the content being studied while teaching them how to apply a needed literacy skill at the same time (Wood, et al., 2009).
Another variation of literature circles stretches beyond using literature circles with fictional text. Wilfong (2009, 2012) acknowledges the challenges students often face while reading textbooks in the content areas and proposes implementing “Textmasters” as a means for bringing energy and differentiation to reading in the content area classroom, specifically in science. Textmasters was created to follow a similar format of the literature circle format commonly used with fiction novels (Wilfong, 2009). Roles specific to the science textbook are created and a schedule set so students have the opportunity to serve in various capacities. The strategy provides scaffolding for all students as they focus their attention on a specific lens, which is determined by the role they are serving in. Students present the content to each other in a creative manner after they have worked their way through the content and to help prepare for the assessment.

Results from an action research study with fifth grade participants (Wilfong 2009) found statistically significant increased test scores on the chapter test, self-awareness of the improvements using this strategy made to students reading, as well as an interest in using the textmaster strategy to read the text book in lieu of traditional methods. Textmasters is just one of several forms of multimodal literature circles.

Multimodal literature circles are another variation to traditional literature circles that may be considered (Thompson, 2008). This practice asks students to read the text through one of five roles: the story mapper, discussion director, artful artist, practitioner, or investigator. Through the use of a blog, students share their thinking about their chosen role and work together to discuss what they decided to do and why. Students are encouraged to respond to the text multi-modally.
Literature circles do not have to be conducted using paper with role sheets, nor do they need to be conducted solely in a face-to-face fashion. In a research study conducted by Day and Kroon, (2010) two groups of sixth grade students participated in three rounds of face-to-face literature circles in conjunction with three rounds of online literature circles. Field notes documented the observations conducted, students were surveyed and interviewed, and the online discussions were analyzed as part of data collection. The findings indicated that students were excited and engaged in the literature circles, they experienced both technology trials and triumphs throughout the project, and reflective teaching was an essential quality of this type of instruction as the teacher and the researchers adapted the format of the literature circles to meet the needs of the students. This study shows one other way of viewing literature circles and may be considered when implementing literature circles in a content area classroom.

Literature circles may be used in the content area classroom for a variety of purposes and in a variety of ways. Determining the main purpose of utilizing literature circles will help in deciding what format will work best and have the most benefits.

Technology

Technology has grown at an increasingly steady pace. According to Warschauer, Grant, Del Real, and Rousseau (2004) “the use of computers and the Internet can provide support for extensive and independent reading and writing, assist with language and scaffolding, and provide opportunities for authentic research and publication” (p. 535). However, evidence of this growth in regards to content area literacy in the middle schools is limited. Searches specific to this subject were not conducted. Nor were the parameters
explored extended to include new literacies. Three pieces of literature were located using the parameters detailed previously (Alvermann, 2007; Fisher, Lapp, & Wood, 2011; Warschauer, et. al., 2004).

Fisher, et al., (2011) conducted an empirical study with 100 eighth grade students. For the purpose of this study, students were divided into four groups of 25. The first two groups read the same science article, the first group in print and the second group online. The last two groups read the same social studies primary source, one group online and one group in print. The students who read online and the students who read in print performed in a similar manner on questions related to main ideas and general themes. Performance did not differ between the content areas. The difference in results stood out when students read for details. According to Fisher, et al., “students who read online performed significantly poorer than the students who read from the printed version on questions related to specific information in the texts” (2011, p. 58). Their concern was that perhaps students are not being taught how to read and think about information in a virtual environment.

According to Alvermann (2007), digital natives multitask and integrate words, images, and sounds as they make quick decisions while interacting with others. However, learning how to read in a 3-D environment where the reader can click on any related links and start reading a new page is much more complicated than simply progressing through a single text in a linear fashion (Fisher, et al., 2011). Related to Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (1973), Fisher, et al., recommend modeling how to make meaning from online texts as a way to provide
support to learners to aid in their success (2011). They also state learning is a social endeavor, and people learn best when they are able to talk to others about what they are learning. Examples such as instant messaging and blogging are given as a means to socially construct meaning of learning.

**Students with Special Needs**

The literature focusing on students with special needs in regards to middle school content area literacy became prevalent beginning in the year 2000 and extends to the present. Evident in the literature are articles discussing English language learners (ELL), students with learning disabilities, and special education students. Often times the foci of these articles parallels what is discussed in the literature on content area literacy in the middle school presented thus far. For example, the National Committee on Learning Disabilities presents the need for discipline-specific literacy strategies and instruction scaffolded with modeling and feedback to meet the needs of older students with disabilities (2008).

One recommendation is targeting content area literacy by encouraging teachers to design lessons and tasks with increased attention to the language and literacy skills English language learners need to be successful in the curriculum (Francis & Vaughn, 2009; Short & Echevarria, 2004/2005; Watkins & Lindahl, 2010). The SIOP model is one avenue to consider. It is identified as a “framework for sheltered instruction in which teachers implement various strategies to make content information comprehensible to ELLs while also supporting their academic language development” (Watkins & Lindahl, 2010, p. 26). A full list of strategies are presented and represent areas of background
knowledge, motivation, reading comprehension, vocabulary, oral fluency and the writing process.

Taboada (2012) researched the influence of general vocabulary knowledge, science vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension in science with three types of students who varied in their English language proficiency. A total of 93 fifth grade students participated in this study and represented students who only spoke English, students who were English language learners in the United States, and students learning English as a foreign language in a Spanish-speaking country. The study offered preliminary evidence that all three factors studied (general vocabulary, domain-specific vocabulary, and text-based questioning) are predictors of reading comprehension across all three language groups. This speaks to the importance of taking a broader, more encompassed view of the variables that can affect reading comprehension in various types of language learners and may suggest the importance of future research in this area as well as professional development for educators.

**Intertextuality**

The Common Core State Standards are the first set of national standards that were created to ensure all students across the country meet the same academic expectations to prepare them for college and career readiness (Kendall, 2011). The implementation of the Common Core State Standards held all students to the same expectations, different than previously implemented academic state standards which differed across the country (Conley & McCaughey, 2012).
Articulating literacy standards across the curriculum, the Common Core State Standards are unique in that they recognize that students read and write in different ways in different disciplines and provide three separate sections to highlight this differentiation: Reading Standards for History/Social Studies; Reading Standards for Science and Technical Subjects, and Writing Standards for History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects (Kendall, 2011).

The Common Core Standards indicate students should be able to analyze two or more texts for various purposes: to build knowledge, to examine similarities and differences in the approaches that authors take, and to make connections between themes and topics, events, and characters of texts. This standard is woven throughout all grade levels and is also addressed with literacy in the content areas.

The notion of making connections is referred to as intertextuality. During the intertextual process, the reader makes connections with past readings, prior ideas, and previous literary experiences to construct an evolving text (Chi, 2012). The word intertextuality is derived from the Latin word ‘text’ which means woven. This suggests that any text is interwoven with previous resources to give a particular texture, pile, and grain (King-Shaver, 2005).

When considering intertextuality and literacy, there are a variety of ways teachers may consider to promote the exploration of intertextual connections. One option is pairing fiction and nonfiction. The pairing of two texts, one fictional text and one nonfiction text focused on the same topic or theme, is often referred to as twin texts (Camp, 2000, 2006; Code & Runge-Pulte, 2007). It may also be referred to as paired
texts. Although it is common for twin texts or paired texts to be fiction paired with nonfiction, variations are evident in the literature and will be presented. For example, paired texts may be two fictional picture books. Another option may be pairing a picture book with the text book. Teachers may also employ the use of text sets. A text set is a collection of books focusing on a specific topic or theme and generally consisting of five to fifteen books (Nichols, 2009). Finally, mentor texts (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007; Fletcher, 2011) employ students in using a writing piece as a mentor for their own writing.

Teachers might also consider that intertextual connections are not limited to books or texts. All written texts and utterances are “inherently intertextual, constituted by elements of other texts (Fairclough, 1992, p. 270). The postmodernist view suggests that the term text takes on a broader definition (Lenski, 2001). In this sense, texts could be any source that communicates meaning (Many & Anderson, 1992; Rowe, 1987; Siegel, 1984; Sipe, 2000). Intertextually connected texts could be print sources such as stories, textbooks, novels, poems, and essays (Boyd & Maloof, 2000). They could also be non-print in nature such as music, drama, video, art, gesture, or a thought (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Hartman, 1992; Short, 1986, 1992; Sipe, 2000, 2001). Utilizing a variety of types of resources to make intertextual connections may potentially stretch students thinking as they consider ways to make connections.

To address the concept of intertextuality, the origin of intertextuality especially as it pertains to literacy is presented. To continue, evidence of the benefits of implementing intertextuality into classrooms is presented. This evidence is arranged in themes found
after careful analysis of empirical studies conducted in the field as well as published practical pieces.

**Origin**

Intertextuality is a concept that is complex and often times misunderstood (Allen, 2011). This is neither a new concept nor a concept explored singularly by one person. It is often questioned if the notion of intertextuality was first considered by Ferdinand de Saussure or M. M. Bakhtin, but it is known that the actual term intertextuality is credited to Julia Kristeva. Kristeva was influenced by both Saussurean and Bakhtinian models and attempted to combine the insights and theories of the two together.

According to Saussure (1974), “language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system” (p. 120). The notion that a sign is not singular in its interpretation begins here. Saussure’s linguistic beliefs replace the belief that an individual cannot create or modify the meaning employed by the author (Barthes, 1984). In essence, Barthes believed that the sign systems used were constraints that must be accepted in their entirety for someone to communicate. In contradiction, Saussure believed that language consisted only of differences. He wrote, “In language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms” (Saussure, 1974, p. 120). In his perspective of intertextuality, he recognized that signs exist within a system and meaning is produced through their similarity and difference to other signs (Allen, 2011).
Bakhtin was more concerned with the social context in which words are exchanged rather than the written word itself. He was interested in the perception or evaluation of utterances made towards others through double-voicing or carnivalesque. This critical heteroglossia addresses that the power of the novel originates in the coexistence of the conflict between different types of speech. This could be the speech of the characters, the speech of the narrators, or the speech of the author (Bakhtin, 1981). He believed the meaning in a text should not be viewed from a stance of monologism or authoritative univocality but rather viewed from a multivocality or dialogic stance. In this sense, he honored and brought attention to the variety of utterances incorporated into a piece of written work. This thought aligns with the belief shared by Vygotsky (1925/1971) addressing how our thoughts and actions can be understood as being deeply intertextual even though they may seem private, personal, or overtly unconnected.

Bakhtin communicated that the meaning of a text is not singular nor is it one that can be arrived upon by the reader alone. Meanings are not products but instead are processes created through the process of transmission. Every reading constitutes a new reading as well as a new meaning and new understanding (Bakhtin, 1970). The process of understanding depends on the context of the reader at the time. Meanings and texts are not products but are processes created through transmission. In this sense, communication cannot only include the exchange of codes because just like signals they are self-equivalent and stable rather than being influenced by the words and the world around them. The lack of this is what Bakhtin calls a “killed context.” Bek (1999)
describes the Bakhtin Circle model as the meaning that is made to emerge and how this depends on who receives the text and when the text is received.

Bakhtin’s thinking connects with the thinking of others. One person is Louise Rosenblatt (1978/1994). As previously discussed, Rosenblatt believed it was what the reader brought to the text that determined what the meaning of the text was for that specific reader. She felt that the meaning readers construct is developed through the transaction of the reader’s evolving inner text, the new text, and the context of reading. In this sense, interpretations are shaped by what is being read and what experiences the reader possesses.

Voloshinov (1986) believed that the meaning was not the sole property of the speaker or writer and is another person who can be connected to Bakhtin. He surmised that meaning was generated between social interaction between the participants, and the word was perceived as a social sign capable of taking on different meanings and connotations for different social classes, societies, and historical contexts. Voloshinov’s work also approached the concept of intertextuality; however his interests were broader and more fundamental in the relations of utterances (Bazerman, 2004). Voloshinov concluded that language only existed in individual utterances situated in specific moments and relations so that an individual could not properly understand language apart for its instances of use which are embedded within many surrounding utterances. Therefore, language cannot be understood in isolation but only in context.

It was Julia Kristeva who actually first used the term intertextuality as she attempted to combine the philosophies of Saussure and Bakhtin. Kristeva (1980)
suggested that any text is a mosaic of quotations and is the “absorption and transformation of another text” (p. 146). She argued that the orientation to utterance creates ongoing culture. In this sense, she invites us to consider intertextuality as a mechanism in which we write ourselves into the social text and the social texts writes us. Kristeva coined the term intertextuality in an attempt to dissolve the autonomous integrity of both author and reader in the vast amount of cultural experiences of common texts (1980). Although much of this work was done in the late 1960s, it was not until the mid-1980s that this work became well known (Sipe, 2000).

It is of great value to consider the rich history of intertextuality and the perspectives of various theorists and how their work can influence curriculum creation and classroom instruction today. Findings from various scholarly articles and research studies were analyzed and categorized by theme. The themes identified represent the literature present in the field of intertextuality. They indicate that teaching in an intertextual manner builds background knowledge, influences students’ comprehension, writing, thinking, and classroom conversations. There was also a link between making intertextual connections and levels of motivation and engagement.

**Building Background Knowledge**

Exploring intertextual connections is one way of building students’ background knowledge. Students must have adequate background knowledge in order to access and comprehend text in all subject areas (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Using texts that are connected is one way to increase students’ background knowledge and increase the opportunity to make connections while reading (Code & Runge-Pulte, 2007; Soalt, 2005;
Taliaferro, 2009; Villano, 2005). Since students come to the classroom with varying levels of background knowledge, having an instructional tool to ensure all students have the necessary background knowledge for the new concepts being explored is of great importance.

According to Culler (1994), through the reading of other texts, the reader builds a knowledge base which that can be applied to decipher allusion. With this knowledge, the reader comes to the text with the ability to interpret the text based on the relational associations of allusions. This ability, gained through reading and exploring other texts, is employed with new textual encounters thereby illustrating relevance of utilizing intertextuality to build background knowledge.

When students have a higher level of background knowledge, they are more apt to comprehend what they read. Educators are constantly seeking ways to increase such background knowledge with the goal of also increasing levels of comprehension. Exploring intertextual connections is one way of building students’ background knowledge with a future ambition of increasing comprehension levels.

**Intertextual Connections and Comprehension**

When students make intertextual connections while learning, their comprehension may increase (Alvermann & Wilson, 2011; Frye, Trathen, & Wilson, 2009; Heisey & Kucan, 2010; Lenski, 1998; Sipe 2000, 2001; Soalt, 2005; Villano, 2005). As stated previously, intertextual connections can be made in a variety of ways: paired texts or twin texts, text sets, and mentor texts. According to Alvermann and Wilson (2011) moving beyond a single text as a source for building students’ understanding is an
important instructional approach worth being considered. Paired texts provide one instructional tool to help students make intertextual connections. These connections may be made in a variety of ways.

**Connecting texts in different ways.** Pairing picture books with the textbook can lead to deeper comprehension of the concept being studied. Villano (2005) conducted a study in her fifth grade classroom after she found that her students were unable to comprehend the information they read in their social studies textbook. She attributed their lack of ability to comprehend to lack of schema, unfamiliar text organization as well as unfamiliar sentence structure, and lack of confidence. When she used a picture book to introduce the concepts, she saw a dramatic change in the students’ ability to comprehend. She shared,

> it was everything that I had been trying to teach them, unsuccessfully, out of the textbook, but this picture book was written in an understandable, interesting language, filled with pictures, and had a familiar story grammar with an obvious beginning, middle, and end. (Villano, 2005, p. 123)

After using the picture book, students had enthusiasm for the topic being studied and were able to take what they had learned through the use of picture books to successfully read the textbook.

Often times when teachers engage students in making intertextual connections, they begin with fiction and move to nonfiction. The story structure of the fiction book often times invites students to engage in a topic because it is usually less difficult to
comprehend (Camp, 2000). In this sense, the picture book is used as a vehicle to build background knowledge which then leads to greater comprehension. The concept is that through intertextual connections, one text aids in the understanding of the next text. However, the picture book does not always have to be the text used first.

In a study conducted by Soalt (2005), fourth grade students had difficulty reading and comprehending the picture book *Coolies* (Yin, 2003). To build background knowledge, the teacher decided to pair informational text with the picture book. The teacher felt the students could not participate in the conversations about the picture book because they did not have the background knowledge of the 19th century Chinese immigrants. After reading two informational texts on the topic, students were able to compare and contrast the books. Reading the informational text gave students the background information they needed to gain a deeper understanding of the picture books (Soalt, 2005).

Intertextually connecting texts with different types of resources such as fiction and nonfiction is one consideration when connecting texts. Another consideration is the arrangement of texts. Hartman and Allison (1996) suggest five ways of arranging texts to promote intertextual connections: complementary texts, conflicting texts, controlling texts, synoptic texts, and dialogic texts. According to Hartman and Allison (1996), varying the types of intertextual connections represented will give students the opportunity to think in multiple ways and will increase their ability to think in complex ways.
1) *Complementary Texts* are texts arranged around a central topic. These texts complement each other and provide additional opportunities to learn various aspects about the same topic or theme.

2) *Conflicting Texts* provide alternate perspectives on a central topic and are especially beneficial when teachers want to develop critical thinking skills. Students are naturally curious to find out what the truth is and why the anomalies were used by the authors who created the texts.

3) *Controlling Texts* are when a benchmark text is identified and other texts are organized around the benchmark text. These texts provide students with the opportunity to use one text as the base from which other texts are interpreted.

4) *Dialogic Texts* present a dialogue about one topic. Books in a series are a popular example of dialogic texts. The books included in a series often times include the same characters and setting. It is common for issues and events to reappear throughout the books in the series.

5) *Synoptic Texts* are texts that share a variation of a single story. When students read these stories written from various points of view, they make connections to similarities and differences between the author’s perspectives.

The work of Hartman and Allison (1996) along with the two studies presented demonstrate multiple ways to connect texts as well as multiple purposes. These may vary by student and also by the situation. The types of intertextually connected texts might also be considered when considering the types of responses intertextual text elicit form readers.
Response variation and understanding. Formulating intertextual connections promotes students making aesthetic responses to what they read. These aesthetic responses give readers the opportunity to focus on what they are living through during the reading and respond using their thoughts, ideas, and feelings (Albright, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). In this sense, students are responding to the text with their emotions. According to Rycik and Rosler (2009), it is just as important for students to respond to what they read emotionally as it is to learn from what they read. In reaffirmation, Vacca, et al. (2009), share that promoting both aesthetic and efferent responses will lead students to having a deeper understanding and more effective engagement. Therefore, it can be concluded that when students have the opportunity to make aesthetic as well as efferent responses, there is a potential for increased comprehension.

Sipe (2000) conducted a study showing how intertextual connections may be utilized to lead students to a greater understanding of the material read and in students’ ability to respond aesthetically. His study involved young children in several primary classrooms with the research purpose of learning what “these connections to other texts allowed children to do, what sort of interpretive moves were afforded by these connections, and how these connections developed their literary understanding” (p. 74). Sipe presents four findings in his research.

The first finding indicated that participants used intertextual connections to understand the story being read aloud. The students were stimulated to make intertextual connections to specific words and also to specific word patterns. The participants in the study instantly recognized when an alternative version of *The Gingerbread Man* was
shared with them and concluded that they felt the previous version was “more better” (p. 78) because it rhymed. The participants also made connections to the characters in the story, the setting of the story, and even the theme.

The second finding showed that participants used intertextual connections to make generalizations related to the conventions of genre through analogy and compare and contrast showing that they were building their knowledge of genre and story structure by experiencing intertextually connected texts and were using this knowledge to make higher-level abstractions. Although initiated with reading The Rough-Face Girl (Martin, 1998), an alternative Cinderella story, students made connections to various other popular fairy tales they were familiar with throughout their conversation.

The third finding was that the participants used intertextual connections to enter the book, play, and perform. It was observed that students began manipulating the story for their own purpose and become part of the story through their interaction. One of the students exclaimed loudly in reaction to the story after the teacher read a variation to the traditional Cinderella story, centering on the Piggot family. The student yelled “Cinderella, Cinderella! Get your butt down here!” (p. 84). Sipe indicates this as evidence that the student had entered the story with his exclamation.

Finally, the participants used intertextual connections to create new stories or megastories as they linked stories together into larger narratives. While Sipe presents these findings as isolated entities, he discusses how they interact together to help others understand the complexity and depth of young children as literary critics. He emphasizes the importance for teachers to recognize that through these intertextual connections, the
children were using these connections in an analytical way to interpret the stories in creative, aesthetic ways to enter the story and talk back to it.

To learn more about students’ learning with intertextually connected literature, Sipe (2001) conducted a study with 20 first and second grade participants in an urban elementary school in a large eastern city to explore how they would respond to five variations of the Rapunzel story read aloud to them. The study was conducted over an eight week period of time to “describe richly the variety of intertextual links made by the children as they listened to each variant in turn; and to trace the development of their own schema for the tale” (p. 335). Findings indicated that the participants’ responses became increasingly sophisticated as they moved from understanding the story through personal associations to applying this knowledge to a variant that challenged their developed schema and suggested their own variants. In their responses, students showed use of personal, text-to-text, and analytical responses.

As shown through various publications, both empirical and practical in nature, teaching in an intertextual manner promotes varying responses. At times, the various types of responses can be directly connected to students’ understanding.

**Gaining a deeper understanding.** The use of multiple texts provide learners with deeper and more nuanced understanding of the concepts being studied because they offer learners the opportunity to refine their understandings by making comparisons and links between texts (Heisey & Kucan, 2011; Jesson, McNaughton, & Parr, 2011). This was shown in a study conducted by Heisey and Kucan (2011) with first and second grade students. In this study, three picture books focusing on three different scientists were
read to students in a read-aloud format to reveal the breadth and depth of scientific inquiry. The findings indicated that exposing students to multiple texts provided multiple opportunities for students to develop a robust representation of scientific effort, thus showing how knowledge builds on knowledge. This concept led to students being active meaning makers and thus readers who read with a greater understanding of the material read.

Comprehension is influenced by the resources promoting intertextual relationships made available to students (Lemke, 1992). Not only does employing intertextual learning have a potential for influencing comprehension of the texts being read at the time, it also has the potential to influence future learning. According to Lenski (2001), making intertextual connections has the potential to deepen the interpretation of the texts being read but also to strengthen subsequent student learning. In this sense, the use of intertextual connections stretches beyond present time use and into future learning experiences.

**Intertextual Connections and Thinking**

When teachers use multiple resources in the classroom, the opportunity to think in critical ways increases (Giorgis & Johnson, 2002). Students may learn to brainstorm ideas and make connections while reading, through the modeling done by the teacher. They may apply this knowledge as they create charts and webs displaying their thinking and then use these materials as they learn about the topic more deeply and discuss their ideas with their peers.
The use of multiple texts helps expand students’ abilities to synthesize concepts across a range of print resources (Giorgis & Johnston, 2002; Hynd, 1999, 2002; Walker & Bean, 2002). While synthesizing concepts, the students’ thinking is taken far above literal level thinking. Readers use complex thinking strategies as they make intertextual connections and show that each text exists in relation to previous or future texts (Chi, 1995; Hartman, 1995). This type of thinking is taken to a higher level because it is done with multiple texts.

Results from a case study conducted with five eighth grade participants from a rural high school showed how students may exhibit complex thinking as they move beyond literal thinking about story elements towards analyzing and questioning the intentions of the author (Saunders, 1997). During this study, Saunders used dialogue journals (Atwell, 1987) between the teacher and her participants as one form of data along with field notes, audio and videotaping, self-evaluations, and interviews. The dialogue journal began with the students responding to Dicey’s Song (Voigt, 1982) by writing in their dialogue journal and continued while Robin, the focus participant, read various books throughout the study. Saunders found that Robin’s writing showed how “dialogue writing became a heuristic device for making connections, recording interpretations, and fleshing out anomalies” (p. 550) as she uncovered ways of sharing and exploring literature. Although exploring intertextuality was not the purpose of this study, Saunders found that Robin wrote intertextually throughout her journal responses. After responding to Dicey’s Song, Robin continued to reference connections she could make between the new characters and Dicey. Saunders also found that this intertextual
tying had potential for reflexive thinking as Robin searched for new meaning while still connecting on her past learning experiences from reading *Dicey’s Song*. Repeatedly, she referenced Dicey in her responses showing how thinking reflexively and intertextually had become part of her thinking process.

Teachers who encourage students to make intertextual connections are also encouraging active thinking. When making intertextual connections, the meaning of the text is always under revision because the texts are dialogic (Lenski, 1998). In essence, while the reader is constructing meaning from the current text, they are also selecting new information to revise understandings of previously read text. The revised texts are then used to help understand future texts. This reflexive construction of thinking and understanding is often times referred to as an intertextual loop (Hoesterey, 1987). The reflexivity keeps readers continually restructuring and reevaluating their thinking (Short, 1986) and thus makes reading an active meaning making process.

The types of intertextual connections students make vary but often times increase the levels of thinking of the reader. Cairney (1992) describes the notion of intertextuality as “transposing texts into other texts, absorbing one text into another, and building a mosaic of intersecting texts” (p. 502). Within the process of making intertextual connections, a tension is often created that propels the learning forward (Saunders, 1997). As the reader grapples with this tension, they learn in a deeper manner.

When making intertextual connections, readers may be challenged to think in new and unique ways (Bright, 2011; Giorgis & Johnston, 2002). According to Bright (2011), intertextual study provides an interaction between the text and the reader different than
provided by traditional literary study. It challenges adolescent readers to read responsibly, to search out and make connections, to engage in thinking critically, to form relationships between classical and contemporary texts, and to view reading as a worthwhile experience (p. 45). In doing so, students are able to gain access to texts that may otherwise be difficult. An example of this is the canon. Often times, students find this reading to be irrelevant and inaccessible. Bright (2011) shares the concept of intertextually connecting canonical literature with young adult novels. Bright claims that teachers can use contemporary young adult literature to shape more efficient readers and allow students to first engage with books that meet their needs. She states, “accessible texts facilitate comprehension, and books with intertextual links provide adolescents with reading practice for the canonical texts they will later encounter” (p. 46). By making intertextual connections between the canon and contemporary young adult literature, the canon becomes accessible and meaningful to adolescents. While this connection directly highlights the use of intertextually connected text in language arts classrooms, the message is also applicable to other content areas such as social studies and science. Finding texts students can relate to their current lives will help build interest as well as the background they need to comprehend content specific texts (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000/2007). This is one way students may go beyond superficial exploration.

Students may also go beyond superficial exploration of the topics being studied and delve deeper into learning about a topic when using multiple texts or specifically, text sets (Giorgis & Johnston, 2002). Because a text set offers a variety of resources for students to explore, students may find it interesting how different authors and illustrators
present a similar topic through a variety of formats including poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. They will also expand their knowledge and their thinking process while they are engaged in a variety of texts focused on a specific topic or theme.

**Intertextual Connections and Writing**

According to Bazerman (2004), “intertextuality forms one of the crucial grounds for writing studies and writing practice” (p. 53). Just as we do not read texts in isolation, we do not write in isolation. Whether deliberate or not, we draw on what we have read and what we know about specific styles of writing to form our own writing. Our writing reflects the texts in which we have previously experienced because this existing textual knowledge is transferred to our compositions (Bearse, 1992; Cairney, 1990, 1992; Dyson, 1993, 1997; Jesson, et al., 2011; Pantaleo, 2006; Short, 1992; Sipe, 1993). Drawing attention to this through explicit instruction may promote the possibility of students consciously making intertextual connections while writing in the future.

Jesson, et al., conducted a two-year intervention study in six schools. Four teachers were observed for a term each to describe how intertextual theories resulted in refinements to writing instruction with their classes (2011). The teachers designed their writing instruction to promote intertextual support for their writers in response to the belief that current approaches to writing pedagogy may constrain intertextual connections. There was recognition before planning that if students were going to become effective writers, they needed extensive and generalizable knowledge of texts. This knowledge includes what makes texts effective and how to go about writing effective texts.
The results were a production of writing instruction which allowed for the students to incorporate their textual knowledge as well as explicit focus on future applicability of their learning. The observed teaching practices offered students a greater degree of authority over their situated textual knowledge which may not have existed in a different context. The results offer possibilities for writing instruction to build students’ knowledge through text inquiry as part of writing lessons. There are multiple tools that may be used for this inquiry.

One tool that may be used to stimulate students’ writing and to guide students into seeing themselves as real authors as they mimic the author’s style from the books explored are mentor texts (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007; Fletcher, 2011; Gallagher, 2011). Students both consciously and unconsciously borrow, appropriate, and transform aspects of various texts they have previously been exposed to (Bearse, 1992; Cairney, 1990; Dyson, 1993, 1997; Kamberelis & McGinley, 1992; Short, 1992; Sipe, 1993). In order for students to become effective writers, they need to have knowledge of what makes other texts effective and how they can use their observations to create their own writing pieces (Jesson, et al., 2011). References to other texts are inherent features of all texts (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Hartman, 1995; Lemke, 1992). While using mentor texts, it is important to consider this instructional tool as a way to enhance writing rather than to confine it. It is essential that students have a variety of choices while creating their own texts and that these choices are valued by teachers (Harris & Trezise, 1999). Through the use of mentor texts, teachers can give students permission to borrow techniques from published authors in a way that fits their own, personal writing.
Cairney (1990) conducted a two-year study to investigate how the reading and writing of six to twelve year old children was affected by previous textual experiences. Interviews were the primary source of data collection and posed questions such as “What intertextual links are students able to articulate?” (p.478) and “Are these links different for high and low ability readers?” (p. 478). Eighty sixth grade students from schools within the Riverinn region of New South Wales, Australia were interviewed. Most students responded that they were aware of intertextual links and shared various ways the texts were connected.

The links between texts varied between seven different types. The first type of link between texts was “genre” (p. 481). These responses indicated that students had attempted to reproduce a specific genre that they had read in their reading and reflect students’ awareness that texts are often related to form. The second type was “use of character as a model” (p. 481). These responses indicated that some students based their writing around a central character borrowed from a story they had read. The third type of response was “use of specific ideas without copying plot” (p. 481). As the most common of responses, this represented when students used some aspect of the story to stimulate part or all of their writing. The next most common response was “copying plot but using different events, characters, and settings” (p. 482). These responses showed that the plot from a story could serve as a foundation for another story written at a later time but with changed characters, settings, and events. In essence, the author used the text structure as a template for their writing. The fifth type of response was “copying the plot and ideas – in essence, copying the story” (p. 482). These students simply attempted to rewrite a
story that they had read before. Even though it may not have started out this way, it was seldom done by rereading the book. “Transferring content from expository to narrative texts” (p. 482) represented the response from a small number of students, all reading at a lower level. This indicated that ideas from factual books had been used as part of a narrative they had written. The students who responded this way appeared to be so interested in the informational text they read that they used it to write their own fictional piece. The final type of response was “creating a narrative from several other narratives” (p. 482). This response was only evidenced with a small number of students, high in ability. Their responses indicated students who have extensive knowledge in literature and enjoy writing and manipulating texts. In conclusion, Cairney found that students benefitted from using a text read previously in their writing and did so in a variety of ways, sometimes in correlation to their reading level.

Through writing, students should not only be shown multiple examples of published writing, they should also be exposed to the writing of other class members. Using multiple texts offers learners the opportunity to refine their understanding as they make comparisons and connections between the texts (Jesson, et al., 2011). Publishing and sharing of writing has multiple benefits. First, it applauds students’ accomplishments and successes and encourages them to continue writing in the future. Second, it gives students the opportunity to make intertextual connections between their writing and the writing of their peers in a manner that may enhance their writing in the future. Students may also make intertextual connections between the publications of their fellow students which may also strengthen their writing in the future.
While students share their published works and also explore a variety of types of published writing, their writing may increase in cohesiveness and complexity as their literary understanding grows by the web of meanings created by intertextual connections (Sipe, 2001). Students can also become more confident in their writing when they determine what intertextual ground they stand on (Bazerman, 2004). As their confidence grows, so does the probability of them becoming proficient and prolific writers in the future. Publishing and celebrating students’ compositions is just one way that writing instruction takes a social dimension.

Cairney (1992) conducted a study over a three year period of time with grade one students. Findings indicated that the participants’ writing was influenced in a complex way by texts that were read to them. Intertextual ties were made consciously; however, Cairney concludes that there is not a doubt that they occur even more frequently at a sub-conscious level and that borrowing a pattern or an idea is actually quite complex as the writer must then use this idea to create a text that is original. One major implication that Cairney makes is the importance of being selective in the texts read to students and the quality of literary experiences provided for students. This challenges teachers to be deliberate in their selections for reading, writing, and speaking purposes.

Intertextual Connections and Classroom Conversations

Students learn through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981). According to Barone (2011), “conversation is critical to deep comprehension or to more thoroughly learning about a concept” (p. 174). Being active and social in learning is a necessary component for students to gain ownership of the content and concepts being taught.
According to Langer (2001) and based on a five year multiple case study involving twenty-five schools, the instruction in high-performing schools included discussions that helped students to make connections across various texts. By personally connecting with concepts and content, learning becomes real and relevant.

According to Lyle (2008), “many teachers lack the skills necessary for planning effective whole class dialogue and as a result the pedagogic potential of learning through dialogic talk is unrealised” (p. 227). Teachers must monitor the questions they ask their students. They may do this by formulating and categorizing the questions they will ask students before teaching the lesson. Traditionally, the questions asked of students promote questions within a text rather than across texts (O’Flahavan, Hartman, & Pearson, 1988). While questions soliciting connections within a text are valuable, they are limited. By formulating questions before each lesson, teachers will be able to further the number of questions they ask which will elicit connections across texts and thus promote higher level thinking. Teachers may want to consider utilizing a framework to help them in constructing these questions.

Lenski (2001) conducted a formative experiment design to learn ways in which a teacher used questioning strategies to help students expand their intertextual thinking during classroom discussions. This study involved 25 third grade students in a large Midwestern city. Lenski and the teacher worked together to implement an intervention and created a questioning framework called DR-CA (Directed Reading-Connecting Activity). Transcriptions from discussion sessions, memos, field notes, and notes from meetings with the teacher were all collected as data sources. Findings indicated that the
use of a questioning framework such as DR-CA supports the teacher in organizing their thoughts before discussions, thus increasing the number of intertextual connections.

If having an understanding of what is being studied through reading is a goal, having classroom discussions with both fiction and nonfiction text are important (Scharer, Lehman, & Peters, 2001). Teachers may also consider having students ask their own questions in an effort to promote more genuine inquiry. Modeling what constitutes higher levels of questioning by the teacher may be performed in order to for this to be successful.

Using text as the focus of social transaction gives students the opportunities to build knowledge and solve problems together. The discussion provides a rich source of information about how discussion members construct, share, and negotiate meaning through the process of such discussions (Berne & Clark, 2005, 2006; Leal, 1996). The discussion serves as a vehicle for discussion members to think about and present the material being studied in new ways (Hartman & Allison, 1996) and often lead to the materials being more understandable and meaningful (Chi, 2001; Leal, 1996) as students relate personal experiences with experiences of their peers (Bloome, 1994; Short, 2004). This reaffirms the beliefs of Bakhtin (1981) who argued that utterances are not merely the product of individual minds but also filled with the words of others. He believed that language was dialogic and involved multiple and sometimes competing discourses and voices. Conflicts and tensions are inherent. It is through these conflicts and through these discussions that readers make meaning and sense of texts and personally transform them in varying degrees by evaluating, challenging, and arguing about their meaning.
Through the discussion process, the individual meanings of students are shaped by the language of the discussion. Students use and hear language which influences their provisional interpretation of texts and adds to their growing inner text. Students are active meaning makers as they contemplate which points made by other discussion members they should abandon, adapt, or confirm with their own thinking. These conclusions will further shape the students’ construction of meaning. Discussions rich in dialogue and that refer to a variety of sources may increase the possibilities of meaning making (Lenski, 2001).

Beach, Appleman, and Dorsey (1994) conducted a study with the purpose of determining the differences in students’ ability to use intertextual links to interpret texts though discussion. Twenty high school juniors enrolled in a college preparatory English class participated in the study. They found that types of intertextual links made varied by the ability of the students. For example, more able students defined links that were more specific to themselves while less able students discussed links that were more broadly structured and thematic in nature. Although the intertextual connections are personally created and are therefore different for everyone, there is great value to using these connections as instructional tools and opportunities for these integrated into classroom conversations.

According to Chi (1995, 2001, & 2012), intertextuality is viewed as the connections that are socially constructed among a group of readers, including not only the relations among texts, but also with the readers’ previous literacy and life experiences. The assumption is that any text arises from the interactions of text and people; therefore,
intertextuality emerges as a process when readers connect what they have read, viewed, heard, and experienced previously.

Exploring intertextual connections may engage students in classroom conversations and promote learning (Short, 1991, 2004; Taliaferro, 2009). In a qualitative study focusing on intertextuality and the use of text sets, Short (1991) found students had more meaningful ideas and connections as part of their classroom conversations. They were actively, rather than passively, involved in finding connections themselves. This type of thinking also promotes the student being responsible for their learning.

Students may be more actively engaged in classroom discussions because making connections broadens their thinking and the ideas they have. In a study conducted in a ninth-grade classroom, the teacher paired picture books with a novel that was read every year. The teacher recognized that students were not able to participate in meaningful conversations to examine the unique cultural elements of the novel. She shared, “my students dutifully read the novel and said they enjoyed the book, but it seemed that many of the cultural elements failed to engage them” (Taliaferro, 2009, p. 32). To address this, she had the students tell her what they knew about Africa before beginning to read the novel the following year. Together, they explored Africa through the use of picture books before reading novel. This pairing helped students contextualize both vocabulary and the cultural traditions while enhancing the classroom discussions around cultural ideas rather than a literary analysis of the text. Not only were students able to make connections between the texts, the culture studied, as well as their own culture. They
became more active learners through their reading and their discussions. This active meaning making may also promote increased motivation and engagement.

**Intertextual Connections and Motivation and Engagement**

When students use multiple texts in the classroom, there is an increased interest in the topic being studied which leads to increased interest, engagement, and motivation (Barone, 2011; Camp, 2000, 2006; Frye, et al., 2009; Soalt, 2005; Stix & Hrbek, 2001). Students want to learn. However, sometimes they need to be motivated to learn in a manner that stretches beyond traditional instruction. When students learn through the use of intertextual texts, they may be more motivated to learn. According to Camp (2000), twin texts encourage reading enjoyment and capitalize on students “fascination with facts” (p. 400). Although students are naturally drawn to learning about facts especially from reading nonfiction, they sometimes need these multiple texts as multiple opportunities to engage in the topic.

One way multiple texts are connected is through text sets. As students learn through the use of text sets, they become excited about their learning and inspired to seek out new ways to further their learning (Stix & Hrbek, 2001). The same can be true for paired texts. Students may be motivated to learn more about the topic represented or to find out the truth of text presented that conflict each other.

Reading through the use of paired texts or text sets gives students the opportunity to read about the topic being studied in a way they are interested in because they have multiple opportunities to explore resources that appeal to them (Barone, 2011). Even when students are not interested in the topic being explored at the beginning, the chances
they will become interested increases because they will have multiple resources to explore that have appealing qualities to them. Students may find that they read one book on the topic being studied and want to learn more through their reading. When using resources in the classroom which promote intertextual connections such as text sets, students are able to act upon this motivation and continue reading.

**Authentic Literature**

Much of the literature published addressing the use of authentic literature in the classroom focuses on the specific types of literature being used rather than authentic literature as a whole. In addition, the literature is rich with practical pieces and scant on empirical studies. When analyzing these scholarly contributions holistically, it can be concluded that utilizing authentic literature increases motivation, enthusiasm, and interest (Billman, 2002; Broemmel & Rearden, 2006; Chick, 2006; Lindquist, 2002; Soalt, 2005; Zambo, 2009).

Using authentic literature also builds vocabulary (Fang & Wei, 2010; Gareis, Allard, & Saindon, 2009). Drawing attention to words is one way to explore vocabulary. Even though these words are not dictated by an anthology, teachers can still use them to analyze word families, study prefixes, suffixes, and roots, learn synonyms, antonyms, and paraphrases, as well as explore idioms, collocations, and registers (Gareis, et al., 2009). Rather than seeing words in isolation, students see words in context when using authentic literature. The words have real value.

Authentic literature also has the potential to bring content area material alive (George & Stix, 2000), employ higher order thinking skills (George & Stix, 2000;
Villano, 2005), and offers the potential to maximize the students’ understanding of the content being studied (Atkinson, Matusevich, & Huber, 2009; Shelley, 2007; Taliaferro, 2009; Villano, 2005). Being more interested and motivated to study the concepts and topics at hand is often a factor in how students learn. Students are able to connect to the topics being studied in many ways when learning with authentic literature. The thinking students do is often taken well beyond the literal level. Therefore, students’ understanding of the topics and concepts being taught is often deeper. This magnitude of benefits makes authentic literature a tool to be considered by teachers of all grade levels.

**Authentic Literature across the Curriculum**

When considering authentic literature as a tool to use for instruction across the curriculum, educators may consider how students are constantly changing and have varying needs. In addition to responding to these varying needs, considering books at a variety of reading levels also answers the call voiced by the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) that require students to read challenging text during instruction not only in reading or language arts, but also in science, history, social studies, and technical subjects. To accomplish this, the International Reading Association recommends that teachers establish a repertoire of reading materials including narrative and informational texts written on various levels.

While text books are usually written at one specific grade level (Olness, 2007), using authentic literature gives teachers the opportunity to differentiate instruction by altering the reading levels of the material being read (George & Stix, 2000; Robb, 2002).
Having various levels of books gives students the opportunity to read challenging books as well as books they can read with ease. In essence by reading a variety of levels of books, readers are increasing their reading stamina and reading proficiency.

Furthermore, the use of authentic literature gives students’ the opportunity to integrate other language skills and build cultural awareness (Gareis, et al., 2009). When integrating authentic literature throughout the curriculum, teachers have the opportunity to make every unit of study multicultural rather than isolating “multicultural literature” into one chapter as textbooks often do (Landt, 2007). Students can see multicultural education as part of their world rather than just one isolated unit they are exposed to.

Thousands of children’s books are published each and every year. It is predicted that over 50,000 children’s books will be published in the next decade (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000/2007). With such a magnitude of new publications, knowing how to determine if a book is one of high quality is of great importance. Atkinson, Matusevich, and Huber (2009) conducted a study to evaluate a rubric they created to evaluate science trade books. Twenty-nine pre-service teachers enrolled in a content area literacy course participated in this study. After creating an instructional unit, the participants evaluated the trade books included in the unit using Hunsader’s rubric for math trade books and the rubric created specifically for the sake of this study for science. An analysis of the written rationales for the students’ choices were analyzed. The researchers found that the participants felt using the rubric was extremely helpful because “it offered specific content area guidelines, facilitated careful book analysis, focused on both content area and literacy value, and provided a tool that would be used in the future” (p. 493). The
students who created a social studies unit did not have a rubric to evaluate their trade books and felt it would have been helpful.

As previously addressed in this chapter, many types of books may be used as an instructional tool in the content areas. Picture books (Albright, 2002; Murphy, 2009), young adult literature (Bean, 2003), and nonfiction trade books (Palmer & Stewart, 1997) are just a few. Building a robust repertoire of various types of books gives both the teacher and the students choices and alternatives. Since reading is not a “one size fits all” experience, utilizing various types of books is more likely to appeal to all students than if only one type of book was used.

**Picture books.** Integrating picture books into the content areas is a perfect response to the recommendation of the International Reading Association. A picture book is on average 32 pages in length and contains illustrations on every page or every page spread (Murphy, 2009). Picture books appeal to readers of all ages and while they are shorter than a novel, many are highly sophisticated.

Picture books have the potential to “bring the content alive” in ways textbooks often neglect to do. According to Murphy (2009), picture books can lead students to a greater understanding of the world around them. Not only are they entertaining and informative, they may also be a captivating tool for those students who are not interested in academic learning in general or the specific content being studied. In utilizing picture books as an instructional tool, students are given the opportunity to connect to the material being studied in a meaningful way (Taliaferro, 2009; Villano, 2005). These connections may increase their motivation to learn as well.
According to Albright (2002), “supplementing content-area instruction with read-alouds and discussions of picture books engage adolescents, enrich content knowledge, and stimulate higher order thinking” (p. 418). Albright shares the value of sharing picture books beyond the primary years, stating that picture books might “stimulate children’s appetite for information and lead to independent reading of nonfiction material” (p. 419). In an attempt to encourage content-area teachers to incorporate read-alouds into their classrooms that are picture books, she presents three stages. The first stage is planning. This is where the book is chosen and starter questions are designed to stimulate discussion. The second stage is preparing which entails designating a time and place for the read aloud session and acquainting students with the read aloud. During stage three, the book is read aloud to students, and they engage in conversation.

Albright audio-recorded the read-aloud and later transcribed and analyzed it. The results of the analysis indicated that students responded both efferently and aesthetically (Rosenblatt, 1978) within the same conversation. They drew upon prior knowledge to make predictions and elaborate on other’s comments and questions in an efferent manner while also sharing aesthetic responses addressing their associations and feelings. Albright noted that the pictures in the picture book often promoted students making aesthetic responses when they connected what they had read about in their social studies textbook to the picture book focusing on the same topic. Albright also found that students’ responses involved “content knowledge, higher order thinking, and collaborative meaning-construction” (p. 425). Through the teacher read-aloud of a picture book, students’ engagement, discussion, and content learning were enhanced.
Students also had a higher level of perception of what they had learned after participating in the read-aloud. They actively and naturally made intertextual connections to the textbook which also furthered their learning.

Picture books may be used by teachers to demonstrate how to explore literature (Murphy, 2009). Through these demonstrations, common barriers which interrupt learning may be overcome. Routman (2000) recommends using picture books as an ice breaker to engage students’ sensibilities and capture their attention. Picture books also provide a necessary outlet for students to share their feelings and emotions about the topic they are studying. It gives teachers an avenue to engage students in constructing their own meaning of what they are learning through their thinking and their conversations.

**Novels.** It is not a secret that “kids like to read about other kids” (George & Stix, 2000). When students are given the opportunity to read novels in the classroom, they benefit from the instructional opportunities while also enjoying reading about other kids. Often times, novels written for young adults have characters in them that are about the same age as the students reading them. This may be one characteristic teachers may want to consider before choosing which novels to share with their students. Teachers may also want to consider how their students will connect with the characters of the book; will they find the characters and the plot relevant?

Novels are generally arranged into chapters and are often times narrative in nature. This narrative quality does not take away from their instructional value. Actually, the opposite is true. Because novels are written in a variety of genres, the
potential for their use as instructional tools is extensive. While reading historical fiction novels, students are able to live through the characters’ lives in a vicarious experience (Cruz, 2013; Rycik & Rosler 2009; Scwebel, 2011). They are likely to connect with the identity and emotions of the individuals in novels (Hinton, Suh, Colon-Brown, & O’Hearn, 2014; Rycik & Rosler, 2009) more than they would by trudging through a textbook. Historical fiction novels are not alone in those with the potential of providing opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction. Science fiction, realistic fiction, fantasy, and many other genres are also worthy contenders. These books may be used individually or in conjunction with nonfiction trade books.

**Nonfiction.** Nonfiction trade books can take the form of picture books or chapter books, which may be short in length but rich in content. The term nonfiction is often used interchangeably with the terms *informational text, nonnarative text,* and *nonfiction trade books.* These books are factual and rather than being sold by textbook publishers, they are sold in book format by booksellers (Atkinson, et al., 2009). Although biographies dominated the nonfiction publications previously (Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2013), nonfiction is now not limited to biographies and includes procedural text as well as other true stories (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003).

Between 50 and 85% of the books in school libraries are nonfiction; however, they are often not integrated in a great volume into middle school classroom libraries (Moss & Hendershot, 2002), and are not used to a great degree in the classroom beyond textbooks (Saul & Dieckman, 2005). According to Andler (2013/2014), teachers may not use these nonfiction books in their instruction beyond the textbook because they do not
feel that they are as appealing or interesting to students when compared to fictional texts. They also may not feel equipped to use these types of texts effectively (Andler, 2013/2014; Moss & Hendershot, 2002).

Palmer and Stewart (1997) conducted an exploratory study in two social studies classrooms in a small, rural school. The participants were from a sixth/seventh grade class and a fourth/fifth grade class. Four assertions were made about how nonfiction trade books were used by the teachers and students and how these assertions might influence instruction. The first assertion was that the nature of the assignments in content area classroom must change to make use of informational books and in-depth coverage of topics. Palmer and Stewart (1997) share how students would simply go to encyclopedias to gather information for their projects in an easy way. The authors share that if the assignments remain the same, students will continue to conduct “search and destroy” (p. 635) missions for information to fill in the slots. The same might be true today for students and the use of the internet and being able to find easy answers quickly from one source. Palmer and Stewart challenge educators to formulate learning experiences that involve students in engaging deeply and personally with their topics.

The second assertion was that nonfiction may be treated as another textbook, or in this case, another encyclopedia. When students do this, “the rich potential for extended, meaningful reading of nonfiction trade books is lost” (p. 635). Palmer and Stewart (1997) first linked this to the learning experience assigned, as previously discussed. They also blame inadequate research materials. They share that if adequate materials are not
provided for students, they are going to read one text, and quickly, to find the information they need.

The third assertion is that teachers and students must have training to effectively use nonfiction trade books. Providing professional development for teachers on how to effectively select and use trade books in their classroom would be of great benefit. In turn, the teachers could provide meaningful instruction to their students to support them reading these texts.

The fourth and final assertion is that a proactive and knowledgeable librarian is essential when using nonfiction trade books in content area classes. Teachers should include the librarian in unit planning and implementation. Rather than selecting texts because they fit the topic, the librarian can guide the teacher to choosing books that are not reflective of the textbook, but high in quality.

Increasing the use of nonfiction has great potential for several reasons. First, this genre has made great gains in quality and choice throughout the years. It is also one that appeals to students of all ages. The quality of books published that are nonfiction have also improved. The Common Core State Standards have stated that not only must students read complex tests, 50 to 55% of their reading should be nonfiction in nature (CCSS, 2010).

Moss and Hendershot (2002) conducted a two year ethnographic study with 48 sixth grade students who learned in a small group format with assigned reading. Field notes from observations and journal responses were the main sources of data collection.
They found that there were several factors that motivated students to choose the books that they did to read.

First, was their “need to know” about the facts after seeing the front cover of the book. Seventy-five percent of the students shared that they chose the book because they were very curious to learn about the topic. They were naturally drawn to wanting to know more about the topics available to them. Second was the visual appeal of the nonfiction books. While adults may feel that this is superficial, 48% of the students reflected in the journals that they were drawn in by the pictures. Sometimes these pictures helped students make connections between what they were reading and seeing and their own lives. The third finding shared that 40% of the students responded about the authors and the intertextual connections they were able to make. Making connections to what they had already learned or what they already knew about either the author or the event, motivated them to want to learn more through reading. The fourth finding was that 29% of the students shared that the authors and awards were a motivating factor. Students relied on quality authors and notable awards because they felt they would lead them to choosing books they would enjoy reading and learn from. Twenty nine percent of the students made their choices because of personal connections. For example, they may have chosen a book on World War II because they had a relative who served in this war. The final finding found that 27% of students indicated that they chose their book based on the recommendations of their peers.

In conclusion to their study, students shared that they enjoyed reading nonfiction. Thirty-three percent of the students shared that nonfiction was now their favorite genre of
Students also shared that their overall interest in reading had increased as a result of reading more nonfiction books in their class.

When using nonfiction trade books, students are engaged in the content they read about and often linger with the text in a way that is not evident in textbook reading. They are also often motivated to learn more about the topics being explored and may seek ways of gaining this knowledge on their own.

**Writing in the Content Areas**

In classrooms, writing activities often have the potential to serve three functions. First, they draw on knowledge and experience that is relevant to prepare for new activities. Second, they review and consolidate new experiences and information. Third, they provide an opportunity to extend and reformulate knowledge. There are many alternatives and many types of writing that will aid teachers and students in serving these functions (Langer & Applebee, 1987).

The National Commission on Writing emphasizes the importance of writing when they state:

If students are to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw in formation and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, if students are to learn, they must write. (2003, p. 9)

Through the process of writing, students’ learning is enhanced. While writing, students develop knowledge (National Commission on Writing, 2003) and discover meaning (Murray, 1987).
Writing should give students the opportunity to think through issues while composing and provide them with opportunities to demonstrate breadth and depth of what they know and to make connections. They should also be given opportunities to raise new issues to contemplate and explore (Langer, 2010). Graham and Perin (2007) communicate the importance writing plays in the learning process, “if today’s youngsters cannot read with understanding, think about and analyze what they’ve read, and then write clearly and effectively about what they’ve learned and what they think, then they may never be able to do justice to their talents and their potential” (p. 1). Graham and Perin (2007) believe writing can be a tool to extend and deepen students’ knowledge as well as to learn subject matter.

Although there are many alternatives to consider when utilizing writing in the content areas, educators often revert to traditional forms of writing. Examples can be found in various studies.

In Applebee’s study of American secondary schools across subject areas, it was found that even though writing encompassed 44% of the school day, only 3% of students’ school time or time spent on homework was spent composing writing that was a paragraph in length or longer (1981). Applebee (1981) also found that most often the teaching of writing was merely the making of assignments. Prewriting activities were around three minutes in length and primarily focused on procedures. During writing activities were “almost nonexistent” (Applebee, 1981, p. 90). Under 33% of teachers required more than a single draft. Applebee concluded that these characteristics may have been because so much of the writing functioned with the purpose of assessing
subject matter knowledge rather than to explore new material. Hence, the assignments were a simple affair and consisted of a few sentences setting out a topic which were given in class and finished for homework. Students were expected to write a page or less that would be graded by the teacher.

Langer and Applebee (1987) conducted a study based on the assumption that to “improve the teaching of school writing, particularly in the context of academic tasks, is also important to improve the quality of thinking of school children” (p. 3). They studied 18 science and social studies teachers who were recommended for their interest in including writing in their instruction. However, these teachers felt they had little time and inclination to include many writing experiences in their classrooms.

Thirty years after the study first discussed, Applebee and Langer (2011) analyzed how practices had changed. They found that students wrote more for their English classes than any other subject but wrote more for the other subjects combined than for English. When viewing the responses from all subject area teachers, Applebee and Langer (2011) concluded that “the typical student would be expected to produce approximately 1.6 pages a week of extended prose for English, and another 2.1 pages for the other three subjects combined” (p. 15). Compositions of three or more pages continued to be low. For this study, 8,542 assignments were gathered from 138 case study students, selected from schools because of their emphasis on writing instruction. Findings indicated that only 19% of the writing collected represented extended writing of a paragraph or more, and the rest consisted of fill in the blank and short answer exercises to include copying information from the teacher presentations and lectures. Applebee
and Langer (2011) reference these types of writing as “writing without composing” (p. 15).

Classroom observations showed an increase over the previous study but this increase was minimal. Previously 3.8% of class time was devoted to extended writing of a paragraph or more, and the present study found 7.7% of the time spent with this purpose. Applebee and Langer share, “it is interesting that in all subjects, there is somewhat more time devoted to writing in the classes in the current study, and more in high school than in middle school, even though the overall amount of time devoted to writing remains distressingly low” (2011, p. 16).

While note taking, copying from teacher presentations, and short-answer questions employ limited, low-level thinking, there are many potential benefits when students write in relevant and meaningful ways. Meaningful writing involves stretching students’ thinking and therefore has more benefits than the literal level writing previously discussed.

One potential benefit in writing in the content areas in a meaningful way is that students have better retention of the content they are studying (Dotolo & Nicolay, 2008; Gahn, 1989; Marzano, 2012). It is common for students to learn in the content areas in a manner that allows them to perform well on the test. Unfortunately, it is also common for students to forget their newly learned knowledge after they have used it for the intention they learned it for, to succeed on the test. According to Pearce (1984), writing aids in retention.
Because writing is such an active process, students actually learn while they write and are aided in developing an understanding of key concepts (Dlugokienksi & Sampson, 2008; Knipper & Duggan, 2006; Marzano, 2012). This stretches beyond mere rote memorization and engages students in synthesizing and analyzing as they determine how they will represent the facts they have learned. In essence, students may learn just as much as they engage in the process of writing as they did about the topic prior to writing.

There are two forms of writing that may occur in the content areas. The first is informal writing or otherwise referred to as “writing-to-learn.” The second type of writing is more formal and is referred to as “public writing” or “creative writing.”

**Writing to Learn in the Content Areas**

“Writing-to-learn” activities are usually informal in nature. Although not usually graded, these activities are beneficial. According to Applebee and Langer (2011), students are more apt to write and to share their writing when they are not graded. Because there is not a risk of failure, students can participate for the purpose learning and only learning. They may also create a valuable learning tool for the future.

There are many “writing-to-learn” activities that may be implemented into the classroom (Daniels, Zemelman, & Steineke, 2007). Just a few examples include admit and exit slips, brainstorming activities, double-entry journals, and reflective writes. As students “write-to-learn” in the content areas they often employ higher order thinking skills (Applebee, Langer, Mullis, & Jenkins, 1990; Johnson, Holcombe, Simms, & Wilson, 1993) as well as develop critical thinking skills (Dotolo & Nicolay, 2008;
Twelve home economics teachers participated in a study based off of three different one-day workshops focusing on using writing in their content area. These workshops were conducted by a university faculty member and attended voluntarily by 155 teachers (Johnson, et al., 1993). Of the 155 teachers, twelve participants were interviewed following the professional development session and were selected as a result of examining the total population available and then considering teaching experience, school size, and the setting of their school being in an urban or rural area. The interview questions were designed to learn about how the participants used writing activities in their instruction, their purposes for using writing, and the ways in which they worked with students. The interviews were conducted in the teachers’ schools, were audio recorded, and later transcribed for analysis.

The findings indicated that the teachers used writing to assist learning. They felt that writing in their content area gave students the opportunity to not only summarize and get closure from the lessons but also to generate ideas and reactions on their own, as well as to write at a higher level of thinking. The teachers who participated, reported examples of writing in each of the three categories identified by Langer and Applebee (1987) shared previously. More examples were reported for extension or review than for preparation for new learning.

Upon analysis, two themes emerged from the interviews. The first was that writing helps students gain understanding and confidence in dealing with their concerns.
The second theme was that writing was a vehicle to personalize the subject matter learned in home economics. One teacher shared how writing to learn in her content area really shifted her thinking and practices. She explained, “it has made me be able to let the students do the learning . . . I am a learner also, with the students” (p. 158).

The study also showed examples of writing that communicated information to a variety of audiences which contradicted the belief of Martin, Newton, and Parker (1976) who shared that it is difficult to have students communicate genuinely in writing because the teacher is often seen as the evaluator rather than someone who is interested in being communicated with. One teacher gave an example of her students taking turns writing an article of their choice, connected to what they learned in class and publishing these in a newsletter. Another teacher talked about having students create summaries and reactions based off of popular literature related to a parenting class. Still another teacher reported having students take turns keeping an official record of what they had learned to share with student who were absent.

Informational writing was not the only type of writing implemented as a result of the professional development. Students also wrote persuasively to their Senator to complain that there was too much packing material being used leading to the issues they had researched on a landfill in their community.

Findings from a study conducted by La Paz (2005) indicated the importance of explicit instruction for students writing in the content areas. Seventy eighth grade students of varied learning abilities participated in an integrated social studies and language arts unit designed with the purpose of promoting historical understandings and
argumentative writing skills. Students in the experimental group were taught to apply historical reasoning strategies and as well as an argumentative writing strategy while students in the control group learned about the same topic but did not have this explicit instruction. Findings indicated that when compared with the 62 students in the control group, students who participated in the explicit instruction wrote in a manner that was historically accurate and more persuasive, regardless of their initial learning profile. These findings emphasize the importance of explicit instruction. However, teachers are not always taught how to teach writing.

As a former English and social studies teacher, Totten (2005) conducted a study to learn if teacher education had progressed in the area of writing since he took his teacher education courses in the early 1970s in California. He sent 104 inquiries to institutions with teacher candidate programs; two institutions were selected from each state with four selected from Washington D.C. He asked if their pre-service candidates were required to take a course on process writing and defined a process writing course as a course which incorporates writing-to-learn concepts and/or writing strategies across the curriculum. If the institution did require such a course, he asked for them to send him a course description and syllabus. Forty-seven of the 104 institutions responded. While 19 indicated that they did not require a separate course on process writing, only four of the remaining 28 responded that they required all pre-service candidates to take this separate course. Four institutions indicated that only students who were enrolled in English education programs were required to take a course on process writing; one institution indicated it required only those students preparing to teach English and/or social studies
to take a course on process writing; thirteen institutions indicated that they required all pre-service candidates to take a course in literacy which would incorporate both reading and writing; and six institutions indicated that the concept of process writing was included along with numerous other pedagogical components in methods for pre-service students. Totten (2005) concluded that it may be wise for college education faculties to examine their programs to determine strengths and weaknesses and to implement significant changes.

In conclusion, it has been noted that there are many benefits to writing to learn in the content areas. This has been demonstrated through the review of both practical and empirical literature in the field. Also, of great benefit is considering public writing and creative writing in the content areas.

**Public Writing and Creative Writing in the Content Areas**

Public writing pieces are more substantial than writing-to-learn activities and often times involve students in the process of writing (Daniels, et al., 2007). They are centered on a specific purpose and often times have an audience in mind. Many times, public writing encompasses creative writing.

There are many benefits to students writing creatively in their content area classrooms. Students who have the opportunity to use creative writing in the classroom are given the opportunity to explore the concepts being studied more deeply (Greenwald, 2000), develop their knowledge of the content being studied (Allen & Molina, 1994; Rule, Kane, & Carnicelli, 2004), and think at higher levels while thinking critically.
These benefits reach beyond literal, low-level, and low-interest thinking.

If the desire to create something new is inherent in each and every human being (Firek, 2006), then it should not come as a surprise that students view learning as fun when students use creative writing in the content areas (Young, Virmani, & Kusek, 2001) and actually enjoy their learning (Everhart & Harris, 2002; Lackey, 1994). According to Goma (2001), creative writing encourages creativity and imagination and enriches the learning experiences of students. Teachers strive to engage their students in high-interest learning experiences. Writing creatively in the content areas may be one path worth travelling to engage students in their learning.

Creative writing can be used to enhance learning across the curriculum and is not limited to one single method. It can take many different shapes varying in complexity. Students can write poems (Bogina & Roberts, 2005; Keller & Davidson, 2001), create posters (Allen & Molina, 1994), write simulated letters (Greenwald, 2000), create content-based tales (Burgmayer, 2011; Young, et al., 2001), and other creative alternatives to the traditional term paper (Black, 1994; Goma, 2001; Lackey, 1994). The possibilities are endless as are the areas in which creative writing can be employed in the content areas. The amount of information needed to accomplish such a feat stretches far past simple rote memorization of literal level facts.

When writing creatively in the content areas, students are engaged in their learning because they not only have to collect and learn facts but also need to write about the facts from alternate genres and viewpoints. While doing this, the facts that students
are learning come alive for them. Grierson, Anson, and Baird (2002) learned this from sixth grade students who were engaged in multigenre writing project as part of a literature unit centering on *The Devil’s Arithmetic* (1988). The two teachers, Amy Anson and Jacoy Baird, wanted to learn if a multigenre unit would help their students gain a deep understanding of the book’s themes and increase their awareness of how different written genres relate to specific situations and social contexts. They also wanted to know if multigenre writing would encourage their students to approach the task of writing differently than the familiar and basic book report writing which often encompasses students cutting and pasting information that lacks voice and meaning. Students were supported as they worked through the process. Even though students had checkpoints, they sometimes had difficulty organizing their time and also needed encouragement to continue. Through their writing, their learning became real as shared, “although students collect facts, it is not until they begin to write about these facts from viewpoints or alternate genres that the facts come alive” (Grierson, et al., 2002, p. 56). This type of writing allowed the sixth graders to explore new ways of thinking and expressing themselves. The project caught the imagination of even the most difficult students, and the unexpected and sustained interest that students displayed throughout the writing project astonished their teachers.

Another example of creative writing is shared from a tenth grade chemistry class where students found writing “Tales of Four Electrons” an engaging and interactive way of learning and reviewing the concepts they had been taught while creating their own tales (Burgmayer, 2011). Students were given the requirements of incorporating all 14
bonding concepts and 35 of 44 bonding vocabulary words in a way that was creative and demonstrated their understanding. The story option was encouraged to students. The students admitted that this was “one of the most difficult assignments” (p. 56). However, both teacher and students felt that the payoff of being emotionally and intellectually engaged was beneficial. According to Burgmayer (2011), “because students are using concepts to create their own ‘world’ they learn and review concepts in a way that is interactive and engaging” (p. 56).

Young, et al., suggest the practice of exercising students’ imaginations while they enjoy writing a creative story to demonstrate their understanding of the water cycle (2001). First, students read the story “The Life of a Drop of Water” (pp. 32 – 34) which served the purpose of drawing the students in and taking advantage of their curiosity with natural disasters. This story shares how a water droplet experiences many natural disasters. Once students read the story and reviewed the steps of the water cycle, they were instructed to imagine that they, themselves were droplets of water caught up in a natural disaster while they wrote their own stories, incorporating facts into their storyline. The results led Young, et al., to believe that creative writing provides a strategy for aiding students in intertwining their power of imagination with their arsenal of knowledge (2001). When students create stories in the content areas, they not only have to communicate what they know in a written form, they need to manipulate the facts to present them in a creative manner.

Writing poetry in the content areas is yet another way of engaging students in using their imagination (Keller & Davidson, 2001) also enhancing comprehension and
content area skills (Bogina & Roberts, 2005). Poetry composition may also give students the opportunity to become personally involved in what they are studying (Cairney-Dalton, 1994).

Students engaged in using their imaginations in an end-of-the-year poetry composition project using mathematical terms (Keller & Davidson, 2001). The students were given a large range of choice as they could base their poem on anything other than mathematics class itself while incorporating a required number of vocabulary terms into their composition. With the guidance of the English teacher, students traveled through the writing project to compose, revise, edit, and publish their creations. Many of the students shared that they appreciated the uniqueness of the task and the challenge of integrating mathematic terms into a poem. One student shared, “it makes you use your imagination. It also gets you to use vocabulary that usually wouldn’t be used” (Keller & Davidson, 2001, p. 345). Another student shared that they had “a new awareness of the multiple meanings of many words in the English language” (p. 346). Students also shared that they viewed math as a much larger subject than they had viewed it previously.

Haiku poetry was used while teaching the change of seasons. Since the change of seasons is one of the major misconceptions students of all ages have, studying the topic using manipulatives and then using newly gained knowledge to construct a three-lined science poem was an engaging and effective way to explore the concept. Evaluation through rubric scoring indicated that 82% of students significantly improved their conceptual understanding of seasonal change through the use of haiku. Students also
used higher order thinking while they synthesized facts to include in their poem (Bogina & Roberts, 2005).

Teachers may also consider having students compose chants and cadences. According to Ciecierski and Bintz (2012), using chants and cadences across the curriculum makes the curriculum more appetizing. In writing chants and cadences, students are manipulating facts and concepts in a way that fits the “pattern” of the chant or cadence they have chosen. In essence, they have become “patterners” (Gardner, 1985, p. 152) and will have the potential to not only learn but remember the concepts employed for a much longer time than traditional instruction allows.

Rule and Auge (2005) investigated using humor and creative writing in the classroom as students created cartoons. The quasi-experimental study involved a control group of 30 students and an experimental group of 33 students. The study examined the effect on motivation and science performance of using humorous cartoons to teach mineral and rock concepts to sixth grade students as compared to more traditional methods.

The participants’ performance was determined using open-ended identical pretest/posttest instruments. Both groups received quality instruction on concepts addressed by the assessment, accessed the text, examined specimens, worked in cooperative groups, and attended class for equal amounts of time. Experimental procedures included viewing cartoons, interpreting the science facts, identifying the humor mechanism, improving cartoons, completing given cartoons, and creating original
cartoons. Control procedures included lecture, discussion, written exercises and creation of a study outline.

Students in the experimental condition exhibited higher motivation and significantly higher gain scores than students in the control condition (23.5% gain compared to 12.3%). Thus, it was concluded that having students learn in this fashion had positive effects on attention, attitude, and engagement in higher order thinking skills.

Creative writing in the classroom gives teachers the opportunity to evaluate the knowledge that students possess. In fact, when teachers choose to evaluate writing which is written creatively in the content areas, they deal with a more holistic view of assessment which provides them with data that may be used to improve instructional techniques in the future while being actively involved in their own knowledge construction (Bogina & Roberts, 2005).

The enjoyment of learning and creating was not only evident with the students. Teachers may not only enjoy teaching concepts while engaging students in creative writing but may enjoy assessing students’ performance and knowledge, as well. Burgmayer (2011) shares his thoughts on evaluating students’ performance from their electron writing, “I also had fun reading these stories. Compared to test essays, reading these is pleasurable, and even makes me laugh” (p. 56). Since many middle school and high school teachers have a large number of students, adding enjoyment to the evaluation process may make this type of learning beneficial and rewarding for everyone.

Learning and teaching in the content areas can have many challenges. One challenge is the retention of the material that is taught. Students may learn the material
being taught in a manner that enables them to perform well on the end of the unit assessment. Then, students forget the facts studied. Through evaluating the curriculum, there are many examples of the same concepts and facts being taught in various grades and many times being taught as though students possess little or no background knowledge for the topic being studied. These concepts are taught from the beginning, as if for the first time.

While students do not always enter a classroom remembering what they had learned about the specific concept or time period being studied, they are far more likely to remember what they have learned afterwards when they write in the content areas because they are actively engaged in the content. Firek (2006) highlights potential benefits by sharing that we remember what we write. He shares, “most high school students do not remember the thousands of multiple choice questions they answer, but they can tell you about every paper they wrote. And asking students to write creatively helps combat the copy-paste-nature of typical academic writing” (p. 185). Hence, writing creatively in the content areas gives students the opportunity to learn beyond just simply being able to choose the correct bubble to fill in on a multiple choice test.

Summary

Presented in this literature review is literature that is empirical, conceptual, historical, and theoretical in nature. The majority of the literature is empirical or conceptual. Of the empirical literature, most is qualitative in design. This connects with the sociocultural and constructivist theoretical underpinnings observed in the literature.
A strong theoretical context is evident in the literature. Although only discussed in a limited number of articles, the literature indicates a need for social interaction as well as interaction between the learner and the teacher and the learner and the material in the learning process. Consequently, there is an underlying tone of the sociocultural theory as well as the social constructivist throughout the literature. An additional underlying tone is that of Rosenblatt’s transactional theory. Although the literature is limited in specifically addressing this theory, the literature suggests that students must be given opportunities to respond to the texts they are reading in the content areas in meaningful and aesthetic ways.

Evidenced in the literature are potential benefits of teaching students using intertextually connected authentic literature. However, the evidence is limited pertaining to having middle school students experience intertextually connected authentic literature in the content areas. Evidence specific to having students use writing as a tool to explore intertextuality is also limited. Therefore, evidence from the literature indicates a need to explore how students experience intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the middle school content area classroom.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A journey begins before the travellers depart.

--Kathy Charmaz

The purpose of this study was to investigate what would happen when middle school students experienced intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in middle school content area classrooms.

Three research questions guided the formulation and implementation of this study:

1) What happens when students learn content area material while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?

2) What literate behaviors do students engage in while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?

3) How are students’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning influenced while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas?

This study is significant because it contributes to the field in the area of exploring intertextual connections with authentic literature and meaningful writing in content area instruction in the middle school. Although intertextuality has been researched and so has
the use of authentic literature and writing, there are gaps in the literature. Many of the publications are practitioner oriented. It is also evident that the research conducted in elementary and secondary schools is greater than that conducted in middle schools. Finally, the research evident in the field addressing intertextuality, authentic literature, and meaningful writing in conjunction is limited.

This chapter contains a description of the research methodology. The methodology is grounded in a mixed methods design and a description of the qualitative and quantitative research designs that guided this research inquiry are discussed. The research questions for the study are presented as well as the rationale for these questions. Next, the context of the study is addressed. This includes a description of the research site as well as the participants. Then, the design of the study is presented followed by the methods for data collection and analysis. Also included in this chapter is a description of how trustworthiness was ensured.

**Mixed Methods Design**

A mixed methods model was used for this study. Although mostly qualitative in design, some quantitative measures were used with specific intentions. A constructivist model of grounded theory was used as the qualitative methodology while a single-group time-series design with continuous treatment was used as the quantitative methodology.

Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative methods (Calfee & Sperling, 2010; Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009) with the purpose of obtaining “breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007, p. 22). The purpose for collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data was
to gain a better understanding of the topics researched than would have been gained using either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

During this study there was a qualitative priority (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), whereas a greater emphasis was placed on qualitative methods and analysis. This is reflected in the research questions and the type of data collected to answer each of these questions (see Table 3). As indicated, questionnaires, student artifacts, observations, and student and teacher interviews were forms of qualitative data while attitude inventories were collected as quantitative data.

The study was emergent in design. Many of the research tools utilized to collect data were identified prior to beginning the study; however, not all of the data collected was predetermined. Due to the grounded theory qualitative design used, additional data collection tools were created and implemented based on data analysis.

This study utilized an embedded design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative and quantitative data was collected within a traditional qualitative and quantitative design. Because of the nature of the research questions, the qualitative data was given greater priority over the quantitative data (see Table 3). Traditional methods of data collection and data analysis were utilized for each type of data. The point of interface for these two types of datum occurred upon analysis of the quantitative data collected. The quantitative data collected was analyzed and utilized to gain a better understanding of the research phenomenon. This will be discussed in more detail in the data analysis section.
Table 3

*How Data Informs Research Questions*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
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<tr>
<td>What happens when students learn content area material while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?</td>
<td><em>Questionnaires</em></td>
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<td><em>Student Artifacts</em></td>
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<td><em>Observation</em></td>
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<td><em>Student Interviews</em></td>
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<td><em>Teacher Interviews</em></td>
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<td>What literate behaviors do students engage in while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?</td>
<td><em>Questionnaires</em></td>
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<td><em>Teacher Interviews</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>How are students’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning influenced while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas?</td>
<td><em>Questionnaires</em></td>
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<td>- Attitude Inventories</td>
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* Qualitative Data  
- Quantitative Data

**Constructivist Grounded Theory**

A constructivist model of grounded theory was used for the qualitative data. This methodology was chosen for multiple reasons. First, there was on-going interaction between the researcher and the participants. In this interaction, meaning shapes action and action shapes meaning (Charmaz, 2006). This notion was reflected in the research design. Although the design was created prior to beginning the research, it was flexible...
in nature to allow for the interaction between meaning and action. Adaptations were made throughout the study to fit the participants’ actions.

At the root of this research was an exploration into socialization and active processes to promote learning. According to Starks and Trinidad, “grounded theorists inquire about how social structures and processes influence how things are accomplished through a given set of social interactions” (2007, p. 1374). This socialization was explored in connection with learning and the research questions were formulated in a manner that allowed for this. The data collected for each of the three research questions required the participants to be active thinkers and learners. Collaboration and socialization were an integral component in answering these questions. The questions served as a guide for a deep exploration of the phenomenon.

Charmaz (2000) states when conducting grounded theory using a constructivist approach, the researcher is able to achieve a wider realm of interpretation by assuming that people create and maintain meaningful worlds through conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them. The researcher goes beyond the question of what is happening to determine how and even sometimes why participants construct particular meanings and have particular actions during certain situations (Charmaz, 2006).

According to Butterfield, “in constructivist grounded theory, the researcher looks beyond the surface of meaning to illuminate values and beliefs” (2009, p. 317). Butterfield continues, “a constructivist grounded theory seeks to define conditional statements that interpret how subjects construct their realities” (p. 317). According to Butterfield, these conditional statements do not approach a level of generalizable truth
but instead constitute a set of hypothesis and concepts that researchers can transport to
similar research problems and other fields. This study was constructed based on interest
in what the participants knew and did but was also based on an interest in exploring why
the participants thought what they thought and what influenced their knowledge. The
goal was to extend and expand on a study which began as a pilot study to gain a “thick
description” of the phenomenon being studied (Geertz, 1973).

Single-Group Time-Series Design with Continuous Treatment

A single-group time-series design with continuous treatment was the quantitative
design utilized for this study. Gliner, Morgan, and Leech (2009) use the example of a
school implementing a new curriculum for this design which was conducive to what was
researched with these fifth grade students. There was not one singular treatment that
occurred in isolation. Rather, the participants learned in an intertextual manner
throughout the study. Measurements of the participants’ attitudes were taken throughout
the study at various points of time.

There was not a control group and an experimental group as often found in quasi-
experimental designs. Instead, only one group participated in this research. One of the
reasons for this was management of data. Another was the decision of not using a control
group. Even though data was only collected from one group of students who were the
participants in this study, all groups of students taught by this teacher were taught in the
same manner.

Gliner, et al., recommend administering at least three pretests before treatment to
make the design convincing (2009). Because various data collection instruments were
used for the same purpose as this quantitative instrument, only one pretest was administered followed by three tests during the study and one posttest at the end of the study. In addition to this quantitative instrument, questionnaires, artifacts, observations, and interviews were used to answer the third question pertaining to participants’ attitudes. The goal was that through all of the instruments utilized to collect data for this question, a deep understanding of the participants’ attitudes would be obtained.

Research Context

The School District of the City of Grandview is an urban school district located in northwestern Pennsylvania. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of the school district, school, and all participants, including the teachers. The district encompasses over 12,000 students representing a diverse population and employs over 1,100 teachers. Schools housing kindergarten through eighth grade students are of various designs. Six schools are kindergarten through fifth grade, one school is kindergarten through sixth grade, five schools are kindergarten through eighth grade, and two schools are traditional middle schools grades six through eight. There are four high schools in the School District of the City of Grandview, one of which is an application only collegiate academy, and one is a technical school.

This study took place at Franklin Elementary. Franklin Elementary is a K-5 school with 340 students and 26 teachers. The population of students who attend the School District of the City of Grandview are of a low-socioeconomic population. In Pennsylvania, the average percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunches is 34%. In the School District of the City Grandview, 75% of the students
qualify for free and reduced lunches while 99% of the students at Franklin Elementary qualify (Pro Publica, 2013). Of the 22 participants, 21 students (95%) received free lunches while one student (5%) received reduced-priced lunches.

The demographics of Franklin Elementary are 3% Asian, 38% Black, 15% Hispanic, and 35% White (Pro Publica, 2013). Specific ethnicity for the participants in the study are presented in Table 4. To further define the research participants and their ethnicity, additional categories were added. While statistical data (Pro Publica, 2013) uses categories of Black and White, these categories were further defined to represent the diverse backgrounds of the research population. For example, the category of Black was separated into Black (African American) and Black (African). Students who were Black (African) represented students from countries in Africa such as Sudan, Kenya, and Chad.

**Setting and Participants**

This setting was chosen for several reasons. First, it was chosen because it was familiar. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to being a “stranger in a strange land” (p. 302) in the context of traveling to an outside country and culture, value was found in choosing a research site in which I was familiar and comfortable with. This school is located in a district where I was previously employed. Prior to this study, I conducted a pilot study on paired texts as way-in texts in this school district as well as a pilot study on creative writing in the content areas in this school district. This research site was also chosen because it was truly an urban school with a diverse population. Although these characteristics were not actively factored into the research questions or title of the study, they were desirable characteristics.
Table 4

Ethnicity of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black (African American)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European/Ukranian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Latina</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The selection of the participants was purposeful (Merriam, 1998, 2009). They were selected for several reasons. First of all, I wanted to work with a population that represented middle level learners because this is an area in which I would like to define myself as a researcher and an educator in higher education. In addition, the majority of the years of my teaching experience have been in the middle level grades. Although this school is not labeled as a “middle school” it does include fifth grade which is considered middle level.

This type of school was chosen because students change classes as a whole group which made it feasible to collect data from various subject areas. Because of this dynamic, I was able to research my topic through interdisciplinary instruction. Often times in middle schools, students do not travel together for their classes and are often
times intermixed (Powell, 2010). I wanted to work with more than one teacher and their students in conjunction with each other.

The teachers were chosen because of their belief and practice in collaboration. The fifth grade at Franklin Elementary is departmentalized. Mrs. Neff teaches reading, and Mrs. Smock teaches social studies and science, alternating the days each are taught. Each of the teachers teach writing to their own class.

Sampling criteria was not used because this study did not focus on students who had specific criteria beyond this. However, theoretical sampling was used to determine what data would be collected and analyzed to reach theoretical saturation.

Grounded theory relies on theoretical sampling. Birks and Mills (2011) define theoretical sampling as “the process of identifying and pursuing clues that arise during analysis in grounded theory study” (p. 69). In order to do this, the researcher must recruit participants with differing experiences of the phenomenon with the attempt to explore multiple dimensions of the social processes under study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Because of this method, the number of subjects needed for a study was not predetermined. According to Starks and Trinidad (2007), the researcher continues to add participants to the sample until theoretical saturation is reached. Theoretical saturation is obtained when the complete range of constructs that make up the theory is represented by the data.

During this study, a total number of 22 fifth grade students participated in the study. This number was chosen because it encompassed all of the students in one of the fifth grade classrooms at the research site. Although not determined prior to beginning
the study, data from all 22 participants was analyzed and utilized to reach theoretical saturation.

**Exploring Intertextuality with Units of Study**

Because a reader does not read any text in its pure form, the process of intertextuality can be practiced while reading singular texts. While reading the text, the reader is encouraged to make intertextual connections to other texts they have previously read. Proficient readers naturally use this process when they read, sometimes without conscious thought whether they are explicitly exposed to texts that are interconnected or not. Intertextual connections can also be made in an explicit way while using the strategy of paired texts. Tri-texts and text sets are also tools that can be used to read, think, and learn explicitly in intertextual ways.

These were factors considered when determining the types of texts that would be used for this study. While singular texts, tri-texts, and text sets were used throughout, there was an emphasis on the use of paired texts. Similarly, there were various forms of authentic literature used; however, picture books were predominate. Both write-to-learn writing activities and public writing activities were incorporated into the study on a daily basis. Write-to-learn writing activities were employed daily in the form of free writes, note making, and journaling. Each unit of study gave the participants at least one opportunity to participate in some type of public writing activity; several of these public writing experiences engaged the participants in traveling through the writing process for their writing.
While interacting with the various texts, the participants were engaged in a variety of learning experiences which gave them the opportunity to make their thinking visible. They made their thinking visual through writing, drawing, and speaking.

The participants utilized what they learned as they wrote in a creative manner throughout the research study. As noted, authentic literature was used to broaden the participants’ knowledge and understanding of various topics. These were not only directly related to the content being studied and to reading behaviors. It was also used in an intertextual manner to stimulate writing and to serve as a model for writing. Mentor texts are often used as a model for students’ writing (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007; Fletcher, 2011); however, they are not always paired by topic but rather by the type of writing. For this study, the primary purpose for using mentor texts was to stimulate writing. These mentor texts were shared as paired texts and tri-texts.

**Units of Study**

Four units of study were designed with the input of the classroom teachers. The subjects of the unit topics were predetermined while considering relevance to the participants (see Table 5).

The resources utilized allowed the teachers to meet the instructional expectations set by the school district and also by the Common Core State Standards. Literacy behaviors such as making inferences, drawing conclusions, making connections, and writing were integrated throughout each unit of study. This was true in all units, even those where Reading was not listed specifically for the unit of study. Because this
inquiry was interdisciplinary in nature, reading and writing were integrated into each learning experience.

Table 5

*Intertextual Units of Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Unit of Study</th>
<th>Classes Taught In</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September Immigration</td>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October Hallmark People Texts</td>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November Civil Rights Movement</td>
<td>Social Studies, Reading, and Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December Tri-Texts</td>
<td>Social Studies, Reading, and Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other literate behaviors were addressed during specific units of study. For example, figurative language and cause and effect were specifically addressed in the third unit of study because the reading teacher indicated these were areas where students had a difficult time learning, and she had a difficult time teaching. While the participants may have chosen to apply these skills while writing to create their tri-text during the fourth unit of study, they were not required to do so. Although not indicated by the table, texts with science connections were read during the second and fourth unit of study. These units of study were chosen to give the participants a variety of contexts to learn in intertextual ways across the curriculum. They were also chosen as an avenue for the participants to learn in the content areas through a variety of perspectives.

Common characteristics of each unit of study were found in their design. In each unit of study, the participants completed an attitude inventory at the beginning of each
unit of study and also at the end (see Appendix A). At the study progressed, these overlapped so the attitude inventory administered at end of the unit of study also served as the attitude inventory for the beginning of the next unit of study (see Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Study</th>
<th>Attitude Inventory Pretest</th>
<th>Attitude Inventory Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmark People</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights Movement</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Text Creation</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Attitude Inventories*

Each unit of study included an initiating experience where the participants recorded their thinking before beginning the unit of study and a concluding experience where the participants recorded their thinking and their learning at the end of the unit of study. Both experiences are referred to as student questionnaires (see Appendix B). These student questionnaires, also engaged students in intertextual analysis experiences where they analyzed how various texts connected to others.

Throughout each unit of study the participants interacted with various forms of authentic literature and learned in a social manner. Each form of authentic literature is presented with a synopsis in Appendix C. While the majority of these texts were chosen and explicitly paired with others, there were some singular texts that were used where
students could make connections not only to texts they had read specifically within the unit of study, but also beyond the unit of study.

In each unit of study, the participants used writing as a means to make their thinking visible and to demonstrate what they knew about the topics and concepts being studied. The participants also made their thinking visible through speaking and visual representation in the form of drawing. These were evident informally as write-to-learn learning experiences which included students responding in learning logs as well as interactive foldables.

Students used many intertextual graphic organizers (see Appendix D) to show their understanding of the connections made between texts. The participants made connections based on facts as well as connections that were thematic in nature. Many of these learning experiences gave the participants the opportunity to extend their thinking.

While public writing was used throughout the study, each of the four units of study included a public writing activity at the end of the unit. According to Pytash and Morgan (2013), when students are given the opportunity to share their work, they experience satisfaction and feel that their writing is important and valued. Therefore, throughout the units of study, several forms of public writing were published, shared, and celebrated.

I team taught with the classroom teachers during each unit of study. At times, I had the role of the lead teacher, while at other times, this role belonged to the classroom teacher. When the participants were participating in public writing learning experiences, the role was shared. This active role allowed me alter my role between being an
“observer as participant” and a “participant as observer” (Merriam, 2009, p. 124). The participants were aware of my purpose of interaction with them for each of the intertextual units of study.

First unit of study: Immigration. During the first unit of study, the participants explored how the United States consists of people of many cultures and origins. People have immigrated to the United States from all over the world. The participants explored immigration, how cultures differ, and how we interact with people from diverse origins and cultures.

Table 6 details the experiences of participants during the first unit of study. This table presents the focus subjects in which the experiences took place, the literature used, and the data collected for each experience. While literacy was integrated into each experience, the table presents where students were physically while participating in the various experiences.

To begin, the participants completed a questionnaire asking about how they connect to social studies. The participants also responded to various questions focusing on immigration both before and after reading their first paired text on immigration (see Appendix B. This piece of data was used to see how the participants’ content knowledge, literate behaviors, and thinking would evolve throughout the first unit of study. As the participants read the first paired text which consisted of two picture books, they recorded facts they heard, inferences they made, and other thoughts they had while reading in their social studies notebook. These facts were shared, discussed, and documented on a class
Table 6

*First Unit of Study: Immigration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Subjects</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Grandfather’s Journey &amp; Ziba Came on a Boat</td>
<td>Initiating Experience &amp; Quick Write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>The Name Jar &amp; My Name is Yoon</td>
<td>Whole Class H-Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>The Matchbox Diary &amp; Small Beauties</td>
<td>Poof Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Apple Pie 4(^{th}) of July &amp; One Green Apple</td>
<td>Compare/Contrast Foldable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>When Jessie Came Across the Sea &amp; Good-bye Havana! Hola, New York!</td>
<td>H-Map &amp; Poof Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Emma’s Poem &amp; Liberty’s Voice</td>
<td>Poof Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Interactive Posters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
poster. Next, the participants responded independently to the next portion of the open-ended questionnaire used for the initiating experience.

The participants learned about immigration in an intertextual manner primarily in social studies as they read a variety of intertextually connected forms of authentic literature and responded to these texts in an interactive notebook which took the shape of a “poof book” for the first unit of study. This was one tool students utilized to make their thinking visible throughout the study.

At the end of the first unit of study, the participants created an interactive poster following guidelines presented to them (see Appendix E). This gave the participants the opportunity to make their thinking visible as they showcased their knowledge and their thinking. The participants also completed a questionnaire and attitude inventory before progressing to the second unit of study.

**Second unit of study: Hallmark People.** Rather than learning about specific dates, facts, and events in social studies class, students explored specific people and how they shape what our country is today during the second unit of study. This type of exploration naturally led to interdisciplinary instruction as the people studied not only included historical figures but also artists, authors, mathematicians, scientists, and explorers. These people shaped history but are not well known. I have created the term of “Hallmark People” for these people because they yield a distinguishing feature of contributing to history. An example of such a person might be Henry Box Brown. Henry was a slave who mailed himself to freedom (Levine, 2007). Although Henry is not well known, students can learn much from his bravery.
During the second unit of study, the participants continued to learn through intertextually connected authentic literature. However, different than during the first unit of study, the intertextually connected authentic literature was chosen because it represented various ways that texts might be connected. These intertextual connections were created stemming from the work of Hartman and Allison (1996) who presented five types of intertextually connected texts: complementary, synoptic, conflicting, controlling, and dialogic. While dialogic texts were not utilized, variations of the four remaining types of connected texts were integrated into the second and third unit of study. Table 7 details the experiences of the participants during the second unit of study and includes the texts read in varying intertextual formats.

Similar to the first unit of study, the participants engaged in many informal, write-to-learn writing experiences to make their thinking and learning visible. In addition, the participants interacted with several books on their reading level, representing various people, so they could determine who they wanted to learn more about. Through these books, the participants chose who they would like to compose a diamante biographical poem project on. For this project, the participants utilized information learned from their research of this person to compose a poem using guidelines provided (see Appendix E).

The diamante biographical poem project included several steps. Before the participants began their research, they created a hypothesis of who they thought their person may connect to.
Table 7

*Second Unit of Study: Hallmark People*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Subject (s)</th>
<th>Type of Connection:  Texts</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies &amp; Writing</td>
<td>Complementary Texts:</td>
<td>One Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brave Girl &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who Says Women Can’t Be Doctors?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Controlling Texts:</td>
<td>Matrix &amp; Step Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nobody Owns the Sky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brave Harriet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jacqueline Cochran Information Piece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Conflicting Texts:</td>
<td>Step Book Entry &amp; Quick Write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry’s Freedom Box &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom Song</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing</td>
<td>Quick Write with Graphic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Synoptic Texts:</td>
<td>Step Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Kamkwambe Information Piece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
## Second Unit of Study: Hallmark People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Subject(s)</th>
<th>Type of Connection: Texts</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Various Intertextually Connected Forms of Authentic Literature</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Participant-chosen Intertextually Connected Authentic Literature</td>
<td>Biographical Poem Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intertextual Analysis/Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quick Write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, the participants researched the person by reading a picture book based on their person as well as a piece of informational text. Project guidelines and an organizer were provided to guide the participants through this process (see Appendix E). After completing the organizer, the participants composed their diamante poem and a short informational paragraph. Once they revised and edited, the participants published their poem and paragraph in a book and created an illustration to represent their Hallmark Person. After publishing, the participants collaborated with other students to share their creations. They analyzed their project, as well as several other students’ projects, to determine what intertextual connections they could make between the person they studied and the other Hallmark People. They made their thinking visible by completing a questionnaire (see Appendix B). Several days after participating in this celebration and intertextual analysis, the participants were asked to write about what they knew about their Hallmark Person.

**Third unit of study: The Civil Rights Movement.** The third unit of study focused on the Civil Rights Movement. Details for this unit of study are presented in Table 8. During this unit of study, the participants explored how specific events in history during the Civil Rights era shape our country today. This unit of study was approached in a thematic, conceptual manner rather than through memorization of specific dates and events. The use of intertextually connected authentic literature lent to the Civil Rights Movement being experienced through people, as well.

To begin the third unit of study, the participants engaged in an initiating experience using a singular text. Before reading this text, they responded about the Civil
Rights on a questionnaire (see Appendix B). As the singular text was read, the participants documented the facts they heard, the inferences they made, the conclusions they drew, and the questions they had. The teacher paused at episodic moments, moments where these behaviors would be documented most naturally, to allow them to document their thinking. After the read aloud, the participants revisited the questionnaire to complete the final questions.

Following the initiating experience, the participants learned about monumental events which occurred during the Civil Rights Movement through various types of intertextually connected authentic literature. This was much as it was in the second unit of study. Similarly, the participants were engaged in the composition of various forms of meaningful writing including both write-to-learn and public writing. TABB books were utilized as an interactive foldable and a place for students to document their thinking and learning.

To conclude the third unit of study, the participants once again participated in a “Browse and Pass” activity. Different than the second unit of study, they participated in this experience with a partner. Together, they were to “browse” through a pair of texts and then “pass” it to the next pair of students. While these books were categorized by reading level, just as they were in the second unit of study, this time the participants were “browsing” two picture books which were intertextually connected rather than just one. The purpose of this was for them to choose the pair of books they would like to work with more intimately for the next learning experience.
### Table 8

*Third Unit of Study: Civil Rights Movement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Subject (s)</th>
<th>Type of Connection: Texts</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies &amp; Writing</td>
<td>Ruth and the Green Book</td>
<td>Initiating Experience/Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Dad, Jackie, and Me</td>
<td>Cause/Effect Chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Conflicting Texts:</td>
<td>TABB Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rosa &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Back of the Bus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Complementary Texts:</td>
<td>Interlocking Rectangles &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This School is Not White &amp;</td>
<td>TABB Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Busing Brewster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Controlling Texts:</td>
<td>Matrix, TABB Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dad, Jackie, and Me</td>
<td>&amp; Newspaper Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queen of the Track,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major Taylor, Champion Cyclist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coming Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Synoptic Texts:</td>
<td>Whole Class Category Map,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweet Smell of Roses &amp;</td>
<td>TABB Book Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We March!</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 8 (continued)

*Third Unit of Study: Civil Rights Movement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Subject(s)</th>
<th>Type of Connection: Texts</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Synoptic Texts:</td>
<td>Figurative Language Writing &amp; Visual Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sit In: How Four Friends Stood Up</td>
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<td>By Sitting Down &amp;</td>
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<td>Freedom on the Menu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Controlling Texts:</td>
<td>Newspaper Article with Figurative Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dad, Jackie, and Me</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Queen of the Track,</td>
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<td>Major Taylor, Champion Cyclist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coming Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Various Intertextually Connected Authentic Literature</td>
<td>TABB Book Entries, Category Map, &amp; Intertextual Share Fair Poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Participant-chosen Intertextually Connected Authentic Literature</td>
<td>Biographical Poem Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intertextual Analysis/Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During this concluding learning experience, students analyzed the two texts and created a Category Map (see Appendix C). Next, they reflected on their analysis and the connections they made. They used these to create a poster to visually represent their thinking using guidelines provided to them (see Appendix E). The knowledge they gained through creating this poster would also serve as a foundation for the fourth and final unit of study.

**Fourth unit of study: Tri text creation.** The fourth unit of study, presented in Table 9, was the culmination of what was learned throughout this intertextual journey and gave participants the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to make intertextual connections on a variety of levels.

While writing was incorporated into all four units of study, the fourth unit of study had a strong focus on writing. Throughout this unit of study, the participants used writing as a means for communicating their thoughts and their knowledge, and for extending their thinking and their learning. Using the paired texts selected in the Civil Rights Movement unit of study, each participant composed their own historical fiction picture book thus creating a tri-text using guidelines provided to them (see Appendix E). This new composition needed to be intertextually connected to the books the participants used in the third unit of study. Mini-lessons using intertextually connected authentic literature as mentor texts were utilized each day for a specific purpose as is indicated in Table 9.
Table 9  

*Fourth Unit of Study: Tri-Text Creation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Subject (s)</th>
<th>Mini-Lesson/Texts</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Mini-Lesson: Perspectives</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balloons Over Broadway &amp; Milly and the Macy’s Day Parade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Mini-Lesson: Connecting by Theme</td>
<td>Journal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Each Kindness &amp; The Other Side</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Mini-Lesson: Getting Started/Imagination</td>
<td>Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Dot &amp; Little Red Writing Hood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Mini-Lesson: Writing with Voice</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John, Paul, George, &amp; Ben &amp; Grandpa Green</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
<td>Mini-Lesson: Publishing</td>
<td>Journal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Watcher &amp; Me Jane</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table continues*
Table 9 (continued)

*Fourth Unit of Study: Tri-Text Creation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Subject(s)</th>
<th>Mini-Lesson/Texts</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intertextual Analysis/Questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies and Writing</td>
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<td>Quick Write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the participants composed their tri-texts, they recorded their thoughts and feelings in journals as an informal form of writing. The participants also utilized several organizers to help guide them through their research and their writing (see Appendix D). Once they completed their rough draft of their tri-text, they revised, edited, and published their book in picture book format.

Next, the participants met again with the student they had worked with to create their Civil Rights poster in the third unit of study. The participants conducted an analysis of the tri-text they composed themselves as well as a peer-analysis of their partner’s tri-text to demonstrate their understanding of intertextual connections. They utilized this knowledge while completing their tri-text analysis questionnaire (see Appendix B). To conclude, they wrote in their journal about their feelings about their experiences after celebrating through an Author’s Fest where the participants had the opportunity to share their books with all of the students. They also completed a final questionnaire writing about how they connected to social studies after participating in the study.

Data Collection

The frame of the exploration was predetermined; however, there was flexibility in the type of responses elicited from participants. Previous to the study, I field tested many of the instruments used for data collection through pilot studies. I adapted the tools to fit the framework of the research through these pilot studies. While revisions and adaptations were made based on the data collected previously, additional modifications were made throughout the study based on constant comparative analysis. The constant comparative method is an inductive, analytical process where the researcher compares
data with other data to create categories. As the analysis continues, the researcher compares data with category, category with category, and category with concept (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher continues the analysis moving back and forth through the data, the categories, and the concepts formed until a grounded theory is developed. While data collection was planned prior to beginning the study, constant comparative analysis informed if alterations needed to be made in data collection to form and ground a theory.

Data collection procedures included the collection of several types of data: attitude inventories, questionnaires, student artifacts, observations, student interviews, and teacher interviews. Table 10 presents a summary of the data collected.

**Attitude Inventories**

Researcher-constructed Likert-style attitude inventories were used to determine if the participants’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning were influenced while exploring intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas (see Appendix A). These instruments were field tests in two previously conducted studies. The first study was quantitative in nature and the second was mixed methods. Adaptations were made to these instruments based on the experience of previous participants responding to the inventories.

These attitude inventories were fairly short in length and consisted of six statements that the participants responded to on a five-point scale. The participants indicated their perceptions of reading, writing, and learning by circling strong agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).
Table 10

Summary of Weekly Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Questionnaires</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
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<td>Student Interviews</td>
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<td>Teacher Interviews</td>
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As previously stated and represented in Figure 1, these attitude inventories were administered to the participants at the beginning of each unit of study and once to conclude the entire research project. The results of the attitude inventories were analyzed using a one-way repeated measures ANOVA.

The purpose for administering these Likert-style attitude inventories was to measure all of the participants’ perceptions to reading, writing, and learning in the content areas on a more frequent basis than through the use of interviews alone. Through the analysis, I was able to determine how the participants’ attitudes changed at various points throughout the study. The analysis was conducted between each administration and also by comparing the first attitude inventory with the last.

**Questionnaires**

The participants completed various questionnaires (Appendix B). Prior to beginning the units of study, the participants were asked to write about how they connected to social studies. Participants were asked this same question at the conclusion of the study.

Questionnaires were also included in each of the four units of study. The questions were formulated with the purpose of exploring what the participants already knew about the specific topic being studied both before and after the unit of study, what they thought about various topics, what questions they had, and what inferences they could make. The purpose of these specific questionnaires was to determine what students knew about the specific topics prior to participating in the unit of study and how their
content knowledge and literate behaviors evolved as they were exposed to singular, paired, and tri-texts.

**Artifacts**

Snapshots of the participants’ creations were collected throughout the research project. With continued consideration of theoretical sampling, these creations were analyzed at the time of conception to determine future steps in the research process. This data, as well as the other forms of data, were used to feed the constant comparison analysis of the data and the decision of what data to collect next in order to develop and ground a theory (Birks & Mills, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The artifacts in this research study took various forms. Throughout the course of the study, the participants wrote in interactive notebooks. These notebooks served not only as a place for students to document facts and concepts that they learned but also to reflect, experiment, and share their ideas (Lent, 2012; Marcarelli, 2010). Interactive notebooks give learners the opportunity to inquire and discover without having the fear of getting a bad grade while also providing “tangible proof of learning and all the starts, stops, and reversals that make up that mysterious process” (Lent, 2012, pp. 107 – 108).

The interactive notebooks took various forms for each of the units encompassed in this study. Each unit of study used a different foldable as an interactive notebook. These foldables were used in addition to the students’ content area notebooks, which were used for learning logs and for process writing prior to publication. According to Zikes (2008), foldables are student made, 3-D, interactive organizers. The following
foldables were used for the four units of study: 1) Poof Book; 2) Step Book; 3) TABB Book; 4) Journal in picture book form.

Various intertextual graphic organizers were used throughout the study and were also considered artifacts (see Appendix C). An H-Map (Hadaway & Young, 1994) was one type of intertextual graphic organizer that was used. It was used with the similar purpose of the Venn diagram (Venn, 1880). Interlocking rectangles, foldables, matrixes, and category maps were also forms of intertextual graphic organizers used during the study. The purpose of using these organizers was to guide the participants in making intertextual connections.

Writing can take various forms and was an important factor in this study. Both write-to-learn activities and public writing activities were encompassed in the study. Many of these types of writing also incorporated visual representation. The participants engaged in write-to-learn activities frequently throughout the study. Examples of write-to-learn activities included documenting their thinking and learning and thinking in their interactive notebooks, intertextual graphic organizers and matrixes, informal writing experiences linked to the reading such as the “one word” activity, and quick writes. The participants also engaged in public writing activities where they created more substantial compositions. Examples of public writing pieces were newspaper articles, the biographical poem project, and the tri-text picture book.

Observations

There are many stances a researcher can assume while collecting information as an observer (Gold, 1958; Merriam, 2009). I team-taught with the two teachers during
this study. The role of the lead teacher alternated between us. I observed students’ mannerisms and responses whether I was the lead teacher or the support teacher. My role throughout the study shifted between serving in the capacity of a “participant as observer,” where I was an active participant while leading and team teaching the instructional lessons, and as “observer as participant,” where my primary purpose was observing the actions of my participants (Merriam, 2009). Throughout the study, I made my observer activities known to the group, and participation was secondary to the role of information gatherer. The degree to which I was able to serve in the role of an observer shifted based on the learning experiences students were engaged in.

On most occasions, while serving as a “participant as observer,” observations were not conducted separate from team teaching. However, observations were conducted and recorded on a daily basis. My intent for the observations was to add to and complete the picture I was trying to create with data collection. Through these observations, I wanted to be able to draw inferences that could not be obtained by relying on other forms of data (Maxwell, 2005). In the pilot studies, I was able to gain information through my observations that was natural and was not explicitly communicated while the participants engaged in various learning experiences. It was my intention to gain similar types of information through my observations during this research endeavor, as well.

According to Birks and Mills (2011), observations are recorded in the form of field notes. These notations are important records of events, activities, and the researcher’s responses to these events and activities. I took “on-the-fly notes” as described by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) to capture what was occurring so I would
remember these occurrences when I wrote detailed field notes later. These notes took the form of keywords, notes, and phrases. The field notes were written in a notebook while leaving a margin for notes, inferences, and conclusions made after analysis. Detailed field notes were constructed each day after leaving the research scene.

While constructing descriptive field notes, I made sure to recognize that this was not simply a processes of accurately capturing an observed reality (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). I recognized that the descriptions involved issues of perception and interpretation. Therefore, I conducted many informal interviews through the research process to make sure I was capturing my interpretations as well as the two other teachers’ interpretations, as well.

**Student Interviews**

Like in many types of qualitative data collection, the purpose of the interview is to gain an understanding of the participant’s story. Although questions were created to ask the participants during the interview process, the interviews were informal and more of a conversation than an interrogation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The participants were encouraged to reflect on themselves as a learner and a meaning maker. Initial interview questions were created for each unit of study (Appendix F) but were adapted and altered according to the participants’ responses.

Theoretical sampling was used to determine who would be interviewed. In theoretical sampling, the researcher may retrace their steps or take a new path when there are tentative categories emerging, but there are incomplete ideas and additional information is needed to saturate the categories under development (Birks & Mills, 2011;
Charmaz, 2006). I did not interview all of my research participants. Instead, I started by interviewing three participants for each interviewing period. These participants were not randomly selected as in pure quantitative research. Instead these participants were selected upon reviewing other forms of data including attitude inventories, artifacts, and observations. I also had conversations with the two teachers to decide who should be interviewed to learn more about their attitudes toward the phenomenon being studied. Additional participants were interviewed throughout the research study until theoretical saturation was obtained and a grounded theory was developed and substantiated.

Analysis of the interview data occurred daily so as to determine the number of participants to interview. According to Charmaz (2006), “categories are ‘saturated’ when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (p. 113). I focused on this notion while deciding who to interview.

Researchers may choose to interview various types of participants (Herring, 2011; Knoester, 2010; Leko & Brownell, 2011). Interviewing various types of participants gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain a more complete picture of the topic being explored. In addition to the students, I interviewed the classroom teacher who I worked with the most during the study. This was the social studies/writing teacher. I interviewed her on several occasions because I felt that she was an active agent in facilitating the students’ acquisition and enactment of knowledge.
Teacher Interviews

The purpose of utilizing interviews as a data source is to gain understanding from the participants’ point of view. The teachers participating in this study were an important part of this “story.” While I informally talked with both teachers about the experiences of the students, I formally interviewed the main teacher in the study on several occasions throughout the study. As with the students, these interviews were conducted in a conversation-like manner rather than as an interrogation. During the interviews, the teacher was asked to reflect on herself and also on the participants.

The analysis of the interviews occurred on the same day. The purpose of this was to transcribe and analyze the interview data while it was fresh and in my memory. In doing this, I was also able to use member checking to ensure that I had captured the teachers’ stories in an accurate fashion.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis stage, my goal was to gain a general understanding and impression of the data. Consequently, time was scheduled following each day that I spent in the field to reflect on my field notes in an attempt to form preliminary conclusions and to think about the data I collected. I documented preliminary notes, inferences, and conclusions I made in my reflective research journal. Questions and wonderings were also documented here. Under each entry, I also documented my feelings about my findings for the day. This document captured my thinking and observations on a frequent basis.
I met informally but regularly with the two teachers to share my thoughts and also to gather their thoughts and conclusions. These meetings differed from teacher interviews in that the meetings were not scheduled and took place spontaneously throughout the day. Occurring throughout the study, these meetings gave us an opportunity to discuss if our conclusions supported each other or if I needed to refine and update my findings. I also reread my field notes so I could consider and reconsider the conclusions I had drawn. This process was recursive and inductive and gave me the opportunity to ground my findings in the data.

The data analysis process involved several steps. First, I organized and summarized the data. This was done as an ongoing process throughout the research project to determine what data was represented and which forms of data still needed to be collected. It also gave me the opportunity to arrange students’ responses next to each other when the questions and prompts were similar. This process was also employed for the student artifacts involving student reflections. The final step in preparing the data was transcribing the interviews, questionnaires, and several of the students’ artifacts into word documents.

Typing this data served multiple purposes. First, it transformed the data into a format easier to read, make comparisons, and find themes. Second, I became more familiar with the data as I worked thought this initial process.

After the organization, summarization, and transcription was complete, I read each data set and begin to code the data. According to Charmaz (2006), the chain of theory development starts with coding. All coding in grounded theory is multi-level. For
the purpose of this study, I used initial coding in the form of line-by-line conceptual coding followed by focused coding. According to Charmaz (2006), a researcher names each line of written data when conducting line-by-line coding and then moves onto the next major phase of coding which is focused coding.

To document my thinking, a reflective research journal was kept throughout the research process. As I coded all of the data using line-by-line coding, I documented why I used the codes I did in my research journal. Also in this journal, I recorded my thoughts about the data as I interacted with it. This journal was created in a similar fashion to memos. Just as with this journal, memos enable the researcher to document their findings as they progress through their analysis. Using this journal gave me the opportunity to establish an audit trail, provided a tool to document my thoughts and impressions of the data and how they relate to each other, and also record how engaging with the data shaped my understanding of the initial hypothesis (Cutcliff, 2000). Writing memos expedites the researcher’s analytic work and accelerates productivity (Charmaz, 2006). This was a crucial method because I analyzed the data and codes early in the research process and continued throughout the research project. Using memos helped capture my thoughts and the comparisons and the connections I made. It also crystallized my questions and gave me directions for future areas to pursue.

After completing the line-by-line coding process, I began focused coding. During focused coding, I concentrated on the most significant and frequent codes established when line-by-line coding. I looked for patterns evident in the line-by-line coding to further explore. While conducting focused coding, I decided which initial codes made
the most analytic sense to categorize the data incisively and completely. Throughout the
coding experience, I was constantly thinking and contemplating. I continued to
document my thinking and my conclusions in my reflective journal.

This process was continued until theoretical saturation occurred. According to
Birks and Mills (2011), theoretical saturation occurs when there are not any new codes
being identified that pertain to a particular category. Once I reached theoretical
saturation, this step of the research and analysis was complete, and a theory was
developed.

**Trustworthiness**

When considering trustworthiness, a researcher might ask themselves how they
can persuade their audience that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to
and worth taking account of (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba
(1985), to establish credibility the researcher must consider whether the results are
consistent with the data collected. Credibility was evaluated on a continuous basis to
ensure that I was accomplishing what I intended to accomplish. Adjustments were made
as needed throughout the research experience. In order to ensure trustworthiness in this
study, I relied on triangulation, triangulating analysts, prolonged engagement, persistent
observation, reflexivity, and member checking.

Triangulation was used to ensure trustworthiness and to add to dependability.
This strategy reduces the risk of conclusions that only reflect the researcher’s systematic
biases or limitations of a specific source or method and allows the researcher to gain a
broader and more secure understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln &
Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Multiple sources of data of various types (Denzin, 1978) were collected to answer each of the three research questions and to triangulate the data. The data collected during this research project included attitude inventories, questionnaires, various forms of student artifacts, observations, and student and teacher interviews. In addition, I kept a reflective journal in which I used memo-writing (Charmaz, 2006) to document my thoughts throughout the research process. I utilized the multiple sources collected together to support and substantiate my findings and to therefore, ground a theory in the data.

According to Patton (2002), triangulating analysts involve two individuals who analyze qualitative data separately and then meet to compare their findings. Triangulating analysts were used as an additional way to ensure trustworthiness. For various pieces of data, I analyzed the data individually as did another researcher. Then I met with this researcher to compare our findings discuss this analysis. I also met with the two teachers to discuss my analysis throughout the research process.

Another technique used to establish trustworthiness was prolonged engagement. Prolonged engagement requires the investigator to be involved with the site for a sufficiently long period of time so that they may detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I began visiting the research site and interacted with the students and teachers before beginning the research experience. In addition, I spent eighteen weeks with my participants to gain a thick description of the research phenomenon (Geertz, 1973).
Persistent observation stretches beyond prolonged engagement and ensures depth and understanding of the experiences being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To be persistent, the researcher must explore the phenomenon in a deep enough manner to be able to determine what is valuable and what is not. According to Lincoln and Guba,

The purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail. If prolonged engaged provides scope, persistent observation provides depth. (1985, p. 304)

The amount of time I spent observing my participants and analyzing the data collected, and the reflexivity of my analysis, ensured that I was gaining a deep understanding of the phenomenon studied.

According to Goodall (2000), reflexivity is the process of reflecting on lived experiences both academically and personally in a way that reveals deep connections between the researcher and his or her subject. The reflective journal discussed previously was used throughout the research experience. I wrote in this journal at all stages of the research process including the stages of data collection and data analysis. I also revisited data and analysis continuously throughout the study to refine and substantiate my findings.

Member checking was used periodically to ensure trustworthiness and develop credibility. After each interview, I talked with the interviewees to ensure that I had captured the message and meaning they intended. As recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012), I recorded the interviews and also took notes. The notes guided me in
constructing an accurate account of what my participants said. I also used member checking throughout the study with regards to the teachers. I transcribed my notes and recordings of each conversation and interview I had with the teachers. As with the students, I talked with the teachers to make sure I captured the message and meaning that they intended to share. My intent was to make sure that I did not fool myself and that I was indeed justified in drawing the conclusions that I drew.

Trustworthiness was also built in regards to the amount of time I invested researching this phenomenon beyond this study. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), researchers cannot declare that they have grounded theory in the data when they have barely just begun to generate such a theory. Since grounded theory lends itself to deep exploration and consideration, it took an extended amount of time. I conducted two pilot studies prior to this research. During the first pilot study, I entered and reentered the field twelve times totaling over 1,500 minutes over a four-week period of time. During the second pilot study, I entered and reentered the field ten times, totaling over 1,200 minutes over a three-week period of time. These pilot studies provided a foundation to build on.

Summary

The design of this mixed methods study with a grounded theory focus and qualitative priority used multiple methods of data collection in an attempt to gain a deep understanding of exploring intertextuality with authentic literature and meaningful writing in the middle school content area classroom. Multiple forms of data were collected throughout the research study in an attempt to gain a deep understanding of the research phenomenon.
The findings of this study may contribute to the field, specifically in the area of literacy across the curriculum to include reading and writing. With these research results, we may better understand how students learn in an intertextual manner with authentic literature and meaningful writing. This deeper understanding may guide researchers, curriculum directors and coordinators, as well as educators in choosing forms of instruction that will stimulate and enhance student learning.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Learning without thinking is labor lost;
thinking without learning is dangerous.

--Confucius

The purpose of this chapter is to address three goals directly related to the study. The first goal is to present the data set. This includes the number of minutes and hours spent in the field as well as the types of data collected to answer three research questions:

1) What happens when students learn content area material while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?
2) What literate behaviors do students engage in while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?
3) How are students’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning influenced while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas?

The second goal of this chapter is to share the steps taken for data analysis in a detailed and comprehensive manner. My purpose is to paint a vivid picture of the steps taken for both data collection and data analysis as well as the reasons behind these steps.
The final and third goal is to present the findings of the study. These findings are presented as six emergent themes with subthemes. These subthemes were created to further substantiate each theme, to provide a thick description of the themes presented, and to aid in the ease of reading.

**Data Collection**

The purpose of this study was to explore how students experience intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the middle school content area classroom. Table 11 further defines the time spent in the field, totaling 6,650 minutes. Field entry began on August 26, 2013 and concluded on December 20, 2013.

The minutes spent in the field were minutes spent conducting student and teacher interviews and conducting observations both as a “participant as observer” and as an “observer as participant.” While serving in the “participant as observer” role, I taught and co-taught instructional lessons while also conducting observations. This was necessary because this research site was not using intertextual instruction with authentic literature and meaningful writing prior to my entry into the field. Because the classroom teacher taught three class periods, and the research group was the final period, I did have a few opportunities where I was able to serve as a “observer as participant.” On these days, I taught the lesson during the first period, the social studies/writing teacher and I co-taught the same lesson during the second period, and the teacher taught the same lesson to the research group the final period while I conducted my observation. While this practice required me to spend additional minutes at the school where my research was conducted working with other fifth grade students, these minutes were not included
in the number of minutes spent in the field because they were not directly related to my research participants. These minutes did not include the actual composition of field notes as “on-the-fly” notes were taken in the field and then used to compose more complete, descriptive notes.

Table 11

*Minutes in the Field*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Study</th>
<th>Days in the Field</th>
<th>Number of Minutes in Field (Hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Observations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>360 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Unit of Study</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,620 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Unit of Study</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,910 (31.833)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Unit of Study</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,455 (24.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Unit of Study</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,305 (21.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6,650 (110.833)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to collecting data, the classroom teacher and I agreed upon a research schedule. This schedule allowed me to work with my participants between 90 and 120 minutes three times a week. This schedule fluctuated at times to meet the needs of the students, the teacher, and myself as the researcher. For example, there were periods of time where additional time was spent to provide additional support to the students to help them be successful in their learning experiences. On these occasions, additional hours
were built into the research schedule, and additional data was collected by the researcher during these added sessions in the form of field notes. On other occasions, I found additional time was needed for interviews and for observations. Again, additional dates and times were built into the schedule to address these needs.

The amount of minutes spent in the field were extensive and met Creswell’s criteria of prolonged engagement. Creswell (2014) shares that the purpose of prolonged engagement is to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study to convey detail about the site and the participants. He also shares that the more experience the researcher has with the participants and their settings, the more accurate and valid the findings are and credibility is added to the presented findings. The minutes I spent in the field, as well as the fifteen years I spent teaching in urban, diverse classrooms in this school district, led to meeting Creswell’s description of prolonged engagement. Persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was also met in the study as I gained both breadth and depth from my observations, data collected, and data analysis.

As described in chapter three, this study was mixed methods in design. Consequently, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The quantitative data made up a small portion of the data and consisted of five point Likert-style attitude inventories. These were administered five times throughout the course of the study. Figure 2 shows how the first Likert-style attitude inventory was collected and then each subsequent inventory was administered and served as the post test for the unit the students were concluding as well as the pretest for the next unit. This was the case until the final Likert-scale attitude inventory was administered at the conclusion of the study.
While the number of Likert-scale attitude inventories are presented in Figure 2, the only inventories that were analyzed were those where a complete data set was collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Study</th>
<th>Inventory – Pretest</th>
<th>Attitude Inventory – Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmark People</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights Movement</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Text Creation</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Quantitative Data*

So as not to skew my results (Osborne, 2012), attitude inventories were only analyzed if a complete data set was collected. Therefore, the participants needed to be present each time the attitude inventories were administered: prior to beginning the study as well as at the end of the first, second, third, and fourth unit of study. Eighteen students met this criteria.

There was an emphasis on the qualitative portion of this study; hence the majority of the data collected was qualitative in nature and consisted of questionnaires, artifacts, observations/field notes, student interviews, and teacher interviews (see Table 12).
Table 12

*Qualitative Data Set*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Study</th>
<th>Student Questionnaires</th>
<th>Student Artifacts</th>
<th>Pages of Field Notes</th>
<th>Number of Student Interviews</th>
<th>Minutes of Student Interviews</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Interviews</th>
<th>Minutes of Teacher Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmark People</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Text Creation</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The artifacts collected represented the greater percentage of the qualitative data and included intertextual graphic organizers, foldables, writing activities, additional literacy experiences, and culminating activities. Table 13 presents the artifacts collected. Those artifacts listed twice represent artifacts that were analyzed multiple times and for multiple reasons. For example, in the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement, students’ responses were made while focusing on literacy behaviors on some days and focusing on their attitudes on other days. Therefore, this data source was analyzed two purposes.

Because of the vast amount of data collected throughout the study, data reduction was used to help focus the analysis. The purpose of data reduction is to narrow the focus of the analysis while deciding which domains will be salient to the study (Hatch, 2002). This specifically involved the artifacts collected.

According to Charmaz (2006), “for grounded theorists, a story does not stand on its own. Instead, we use stories in service of our analyses. The power of a piece rests on the scope, incisiveness, and usefulness of the analysis” (p. 174). Therefore, the artifacts analyzed were those collected that would best tell the story of this research study while answering the three research questions, and contributing towards reaching theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is the point “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113) of core theoretical categories. These specific artifacts were chosen because they added to the story and guided the analysis towards theoretical saturation. Table 14 presents the artifacts utilized for analysis.
Table 13

*Artifacts Collected*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intertextual Graphic Organizer/Foldable</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intertextual Graphic Organizer:  H-Map</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foldable:  Poof Book</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culminating Activity:  Poster Creation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>One Word Cards</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing Activity:  Henry Box Brown</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing Activity:  21 Elephants</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Culminating Activity:  Biographical Poems</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Biographical Fact Sheet</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Foldable:  Step Book</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sketch to Stretch</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intertextual Graphic Organizer:  Cause/Effect</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intertextual Graphic Organizer:  Interlocking Rectangles</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Writing Activity:  Figurative Language</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Foldable:  TABB Book (Literacy Behaviors)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Foldable:  TABB Book (Attitudes)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Civil Rights Posters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 13 (continued)

*Artifacts Collected*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reflection Journal</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tri-Text Picture Books</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 14

*Artifacts Analyzed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intertextual Graphic Organizer: H-Map</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foldable: Poof Book</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culminating Activity: Poster Creation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>One Word Cards</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing Activity: Henry Box Brown</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing Activity: 21 Elephants</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Culminating Activity: Biographical Poems</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Biographical Fact Sheet</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Foldable: Step Book</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intertextual Graphic Organizer: Interlocking Rectangles</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Foldable: TABB Book (Literacy Behaviors)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Foldable: TABB Book (Attitudes)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Civil Rights Posters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reflection Journal</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tri-Text Picture Books</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>293</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As previously stated, the artifacts are presented separate from the other forms of data collected so as to emphasize their volume and their importance. However, when discussing data analysis, all forms of data were considered.

**Data Analysis**

Table 15 shows the steps taken during the data analysis process as described in chapter three. The actual data collection took place over a four-month period of time. However, analysis was conducted over a six-month period of time.

Table 15

*Data Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Line-By-Line Coding</th>
<th>Focused Coding</th>
<th>Member Checks</th>
<th>Triangulating Analysts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data analysis process was recursive in nature meaning that I went back and forth in my analysis. Rather than analyzing the first unit of study and continuing to the second, third and concluding with the fourth, I analyzed back and forth across the units of
study developing initial codes and preliminary themes. I did this for the purpose of identifying patterns in the data. This method of analysis, termed as constant comparative analysis is an inductive process of comparing “data with data, data with category, category with category, and category with concept. Comparisons then constitute each stage of analytic development” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p. 607). In following this technique, I could establish facts and verify theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as I analyzed data with the goal of reaching theoretical saturation. Because of the recursive nature of the analysis, I present this analysis process first by unit of study in Table 16 and then by the months I spent analyzing the data in Table 17. This is done to present the actual time of data analysis, which contributes to persistent observation, as well as data analysis by unit of study.

Upon initial analysis, using line-by-line conceptual coding, 91 codes were identified. These codes were recorded in my reflective research journal. In addition to Table 16

*Data Analysis Coding by Unit of Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of Study</th>
<th>Line-by-Line Coding</th>
<th>Preliminary Themes</th>
<th>Final Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmark People</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Text</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

*Data Analysis Coding by Month*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of Study</th>
<th>Line-by-Line Coding</th>
<th>Preliminary Themes</th>
<th>Final Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The codes, I also recorded my thinking and reasoning for each of the codes. According to Hatch, a research journal is a place where you can “talk to yourself” (2002, p. 88). Therefore I was able to record my thinking and reasoning for each of the codes. I used these entries with the purpose of furthering my thinking as I worked towards substantiating a grounded theory. My research journal also contributed to the audit trail, which is a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points (Birks & Mills, 2011; Merriam, 2009) and lent to establishing trustworthiness.

In addition to being recursive, the analysis process was inductive in nature. According to Birks and Mills, inductive reasoning is “a form of reasoning that begins with a large number of concepts that are then collapsed and integrated into an explanatory theory” (2011, p. 174). The thinking and reasoning that occurred during the analysis was
abductive in that it began with the formation of a number of hypotheses that are then proved and disproved during the analysis process (Birks & Mills, 2011). As I continued to research, I considered possible theoretical explanations for the data, formed hypothesis for each possible explanation, and then checked these by examining the data and pursuing the most plausible explanations (Charmaz, 2006). This thinking and process took place during the process of focused coding and is also documented in my reflective research journal.

During focused coding, six themes were identified. These themes are directly related to my research questions. Because there were not any new codes being identified that pertained to the particular themes, theoretical saturation was reached.

I present the six themes identified to answer my three questions about what happens when students experience intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in middle school content area classrooms:

1) What happens when students learn content area material while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?
2) What literate behaviors do students engage in while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?
3) How are students’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning influenced while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas?

Findings to substantiate each theme are presented in an effort to present a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of these themes.
The following themes are presented as findings: evolution of content knowledge, learning in the content areas is real and relevant, real literature transforms students to being real readers, the evolution of literate behaviors, development of intertextual thinking, and dispositions. While I could have chosen to present my findings separately for each of my three research questions, I chose to present the findings through these six themes because many of the themes stretched beyond more than one research question. I present the findings in this manner in an attempt to paint a complete, vivid picture of the phenomenon studied. To provide substance and also to add to readability, subthemes are also included for each of the six themes.

**Evolution of Content Knowledge**

There is an evolution of content knowledge while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the middle school content area classroom. This evolution of learning may be viewed as a journey rather than a destination. Throughout the study, there was evidence of the participants learning content knowledge in a way that evolved. This means that as the participants continued to learn in an intertextual manner, their content knowledge evolved and grew greater in both volume and in depth.

For example, students composed a biographical poem and informational paragraph about a Hallmark Person after reading intertextually connected materials. I am defining a Hallmark Person as someone who has made significant contributions to history and society and yet is not well-known by many. After composing their biographical poem, the participants collaborated with others to share what they had learned and to
determine who the person they studied connected with. They documented their conclusions and their thinking on a questionnaire, following the collaboration. This action was termed as an intertextual analysis.

During this intertextual analysis, Talia (all names are pseudonyms) wrote about how she felt that Mary Walker, the person she researched, connected with Esther Hobart Morris. She wrote, “the thing that connects Mary Walker and Esther Hobart Morris is that Esther Hobart Morris was the first female Justice of the Peace in the United States, and Mary Walker was the first woman to win the highest Medal of Honor” (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013). When asked what else she knew about the two people, she responded, “They both changed the way we do stuff.” Talia’s responses were reasonable as were her connections. When I asked Talia what she meant by her response, she shared that the two women changed the way we do stuff because they both “helped women earn the rights they have today.” (Interview, November 10, 2013). I asked Talia to talk about what she meant by this. She said, “Well, I connected with these books because they were about girls, just like me, which is why I can connect to them and because now we can do a lot of things like wear pants and vote” (Interview, November 10, 2013).

After collaborating with other students and conducting an intertextual analysis on their biographical poem projects, the participants were to write what information they knew about their person. Before reading the intertextual materials and composing the biographical poem, Talia had written that she did not know anything about the person she was researching even though she had had the opportunity to browse through a picture...
book about Mary Walker (Questionnaire, October 25, 2013). However afterwards, her self-reported content knowledge evolved. This content knowledge stretched beyond the information represented in her biographical poem project. She wrote:

> Everything I know about my person is that Mary Walker was born in 1832 in Oswego, New York. She got married and divorced. She did not believe that girls should wear dresses because they could not walk faster so she chose to wear pants in public, but she got sent to jail for that. She wanted to help in the Civil War as a doctor, but they kept saying no until one day they let her help as a doctor. When she was really old, she got the highest Medal of Honor, and people came and listened to her stories. At age 59, she died. From then on, people were allowed to wear anything, including women. (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013)

Although Mary Walker actually died when she was 87 years old and not 59, the information Talia presented was reasonable and detailed. It also stretched beyond the information she had used for her biographical composition (see Figure 3). Talia was not the only participant who demonstrated that her content knowledge grew after learning in an intertextual manner.

Kayla’s content knowledge also grew from what she knew about her Hallmark Person, Louisa May Alcott, before reading the intertextually connected materials and composing her biographical poem. In the beginning, she wrote that she knew that Louisa May Alcott was a girl (Questionnaire, October 25, 2013).
Figure 3. Talia’s biographical poem and informational paragraph

Mary

Courageous, smart

helping, loving, thinking

New York, doctor, reformer, civil war hero

Teach, smart, intelligent

white, short brown hair

Walker

Mary Walker

Mary Walker was born on November 26, 1832, in Oswego, New York. She died on February 19, 1812 at age 86. She is known for winning a medal of Honor, the highest award a war veteran can receive. Because of her bravery and the things that I want my audience to remember about Mary Walker because she changed the way we wear clothes.
After composing her biographical poem and participating in the intertextual analysis, she wrote:

My person’s name was Louisa May Alcott. She was going bankrupt and needed money so she joined the army to be a nurse. While she was in the army, she became terribly ill with a sickness that led her to lose all of her hair. While she was sick, she wrote articles on what was happening in the Civil War. Then she wrote the classic, *Little Women*. (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013)

Like Talia, Kayla’s content area knowledge had evolved from her initial response.

Learning in an intertextual manner with authentic literature led the participants to respond in a manner that was unique for several reasons. First, participants, such as Talia, presented information that represented the Hallmark Person they studied in a more complete manner. Talia’s response encompassed both content knowledge gained from reading her book *Mary Walker Wears Pants: The True Story of the Doctor, Reformer, and Civil War Hero* (Harness, 2013) and information gained from reading two informational pieces on Mary Walker. She would not have been able to respond in this fashion if she would have read only one piece of text. As Talia participated in meaningful writing, she composed a piece containing both efferent and aesthetic information. She included facts such as when Mary was born and what she was most known for as well as traits describing Mary. Talia wrote that Mary was courageous and smart as well as someone who helped others and was loving (Artifact, November 6, 2013). In addition, Talia as well as many other students, remembered what they had
learned about their Hallmark Person after completing the assessment, which in this case was creating a biographical poem project. Evidence of this was found as the participants participated in a quick write, sharing what they remembered about their Hallmark Person (Artifact, November 13, 2013).

The participants’ content knowledge evolving was not only indicated in the second unit of study when students explored Hallmark People. Evidence was found in each of the four units of study and is presented under five subthemes: pictures aid in the evolution of content knowledge, surface level vs. substantial responses, citing evidence to support responses, and enhancement of learning.

**Pictures Aid in the Evolution of Content Knowledge**

As the participants learned using intertextually connected authentic literature and writing, an understanding of the marriage of pictures and words also evolved. This was directly connected to representing and strengthening content area knowledge. During an interview at the end of the first unit of study, Talia reflected on the books they had read about immigration. She talked about how the pictures helped her understand what the people immigrating felt during an interview after the first unit of study. She said, “Using paired text, the pictures showed how emotional it was and how they felt before they immigrated to other countries” (Interview, September 30, 2013). By looking at the pictures, she learned how some people’s lives were dire and that there was an urgent need to immigrate to America. She learned that people were not happy in their home countries. Kayla reaffirmed this conclusion in a conversation that also served as a member check following this initial interview.
Kayla shared how she understood that the pictures work together with the text to tell the story. This was reaffirmed as she shared, “With picture books you can tell so much from looking at the pictures. You can tell much more than you can just from reading the story” (Interview, September 30, 2013). Kayla also shared that she liked that the projects they participated in gave them the opportunity to share what they had learned.

K: I like the posters we made with the pictures. I thought that was pretty cool.
R: What did you like about it?
K: I liked that we got to write the facts and then draw the pictures.
R: What did you like about the pictures?
K: I liked that the pictures tell a story.
R: So you probably thought about your pictures quite a bit?
K: Yes. (Interview, September 30, 2013)

What Kayla shared showed how the pictures and the facts worked together to tell a story. She shared this during an interview and also in her poster creation (Artifact, September 27, 2013). While creating her poster, she thought about what her pictures should be and made sure that there was a connection between the pictures she drew and the content she was representing. For example, Kayla wrote that “people immigrate from different countries because of government, war, or for a better life.” In her pictures, she drew pictures of the countries Ireland, Italy, China, and Korea. These were some of the countries, students had learned about people immigrating to America from throughout the first unit of study on immigration. She also wrote that “Sometimes people keep thing
“[sic] that remind them of home” and drew objects that someone might save to remind them of their home (Artifact, September 27, 2013). These two frames in Kayla’s project were examples of how pictures add meaning to words.

Figure 4. Kayla’s Interactive Poster Project (First Unit of Study - Immigration)

During the interviews conducted after the second unit of study on Hallmark People, Angel talked about how she felt using a picture book to begin her research on Georgia O’Keefe was beneficial for several reasons.

R: Which project did you like the most?

A: Creating a poem. I liked how we got to think of the words to describe our person. I feel like I learned a lot about my person.

R: Which text did you find to be the most helpful when you were writing your
A: The first one [picture book]. I understood the first one better because it had shorter sentences. The pictures helped me describe her. It also helped reading another piece on her. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

The second piece Angel read on Georgia O’Keefe was a piece of informational text. According to Angel’s response during the interview, she indicated that it was helpful to begin with the biographical picture book and use the pictures to help learn about O’Keefe before reading an information piece about her.

The participants recognized the value of pictures in helping to tell the story. They also recognized and utilized the pictures to help them learn more about the content they were studying. Hence, the pictures served as an additional instructional tool in gaining information about the content being studied. This was just one facet of the participants’ content knowledge evolving. As the participants progressed in their learning through the four units of study, they also began to provide substantial responses rather than the surface level responses provided in the beginning.

**Surface Level vs. Substantial Responses**

In the beginning of the study, the majority of the participants’ responses were either incorrect or at the surface level. According to Weimer (2013), deep learning is understanding and true knowing. Often times, these responses incorporate an aesthetic lens. Therefore, a response showing true knowing or deep learning is being called substantial, while those that are purely efferent, non-substantial, and limited in length are being termed as surface level or superficial responses.
For example, in each unit of study, the participants were asked what they knew about the topic being studied (Immigration, Hallmark People, Civil Rights). Prior to participating in the each unit of study, most of the participants answered “I don’t know” or answered with incorrect or superficial responses (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013; Questionnaire, October 25, 2013; Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). For example, when Camila answered what the word immigration meant to her, she responded, “I think it is energy.” After learning through the first unit of study focusing on immigration, Camila wrote that immigration was “moving from country, new languages, new state, new life. They don’t know the language of the country.” When asked what facts she had learned to make her think this, she wrote “because people immigrate from poor and have money or some people live in house, forbidden, in another state. Some people traveled from car, boat, airplane, walk, train” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). Camila’s knowledge had evolved in a way that enabled her to respond in a way that was more reasonable and more substantial than what was shown in her original response that immigration was energy.

Jayden responded to the same question prior to the first unit of study with “I think immigration means people from another country” (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013). While this was more reasonable than Camila’s original response, it was a considered to be a surface level response because it was efferent and limited in nature. However, after learning about immigration intertextually, he responded that to him, immigration meant “people that come from a different country. People that travel on a boat or plane from one country to another.” He cited the following evidence to support his thinking, “In all
of the books, people come from other countries. Most people from other countries don’t speak English” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). It was evident that Jayden had added substance to his first response. Not only did he share that immigration meant that people came from other countries, but there were also various ways they could travel. He also shared how many people who immigrated to the United States did not speak English. He cited evidence from the picture books the participants had read for his response.

The participants’ responses were more reasonable in the third unit of study focusing on the Civil Rights Movement; however, this was not observed until they had engaged in reading intertextually connected authentic literature. There were twenty-two participants who took part in this study. At the beginning of the unit, twelve out of twenty-two (54%) participants responded that they did not know what Civil Rights meant to them when responding to the first part of the initiating experience. The next step for the initiating experience was for the participants to read a single text, *Ruth and the Green Book* (Ramsey, 2010),

*Ruth and the Green Book* is the story of a young girl named Ruth who travels with her parents through the south to visit her grandmother. Not knowing about segregation, Ruth learns about how blacks are often treated unfairly. She also learns about the Negro Motorist Green Book, a book full of places where Negroes can go to eat, get gas, sleep, get their car fixed, and even get a haircut.

After reading this picture book, all of the participants were able to at least respond to the question of what Civil Rights meant to them for the next part of the initiating experience. However, a large percentage of the responses were not reasonable. Out of
twenty-two students, only nine (41%) wrote a response that was reasonable. For example, Camila responded that Civil Rights meant “people traveling in a car” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). While this response may have been made because in the picture book Ruth travels with her family through the southern states to visit her grandmother, it was not reasonable in depicting what Civil Rights means.

There were other participants who were able to respond in a manner that was reasonable. Fabian wrote that Civil Rights meant “black and whites were separated” while Jasmine responded that “Civil Rights means that people get treated unfairly because of their skin color” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). Diego, who at the beginning of the study did not respond or participate in many of the activities, responded that Civil Rights meant that “white people did not like black people.” While the participants’ responses were reasonable, the majority of participants did not provide reasonable responses which were deep and substantial after reading just one text. The purpose for reading just one text was to see what the participants would gain from reading a single text before they read several texts focusing on the Civil Rights Movement that were deliberately and explicitly connected intertextually.

After learning through intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, the participants’ responses evolved in showing their knowledge of the content. For example, Camila, who had at the beginning of the unit had responded with a response that was not reasonable, shared that “Civil Rights is when people want freedom.” When asked what facts she had learned to make her think this, she responded that “black people have been treated bad and have been bullied” (Questionnaire,
November 22, 2013). Her response was reasonable and included what was learned during the unit as well as her own words. The word “bullied” was not ever used during instruction. Camila was now, naturally making connections to what was taught during the unit showing that her content knowledge had evolved.

When I asked Camila about using the term “bullied,” she talked about how she hoped that when she grew up that she would remember what she learned as a child. She shared that she could make connections to Martin Luther King, Jr. She continued to say, “I hope it will help people to know you can be friends no matter what. If you broke them in half, they would be the same with their heart. No matter what color you are, you are still the same” (Interview, November 24, 2013).

Jasmine initially shared that “Civil Rights means that people get treated unfairly because of the color of their skin” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). This was a reasonable response although it was brief in comparison to the responses that followed after learning in an intertextual manner.

Evidence of Jasmine’s knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement evolving was shown after experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing when she shared, “Civil Rights means people who don’t get treated right and then find a way to be equal with white people. Even if they get treated like they aren’t even a part of the world.” She also shared that “black people and white people didn’t get along because white people thought that God wanted us to be separate, but he didn’t, and they were wrong” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). This response stretched beyond that of a surface level response and also included Jasmine’s feelings and beliefs.
Jasmine implicitly referred to many pieces of authentic literature in her response. For example when she wrote about the facts that made her think that Civil Rights meant that people didn’t get treated right, she referenced *Ruth and the Green Book*. “In a book about a little girl name Ruth, they were visiting Ruth’s grandma, and they stopped to use the bathroom. They told them to go in the woods because they were black. The white people would hurt and break black people very bad. It was not fair.” She also included several books implicitly when asking questions, “How many presidents tried to stop Civil Rights? Did they really pour coffee down black people’s backs? Was there really colored water?” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Implicitly, Jasmine was referring to *Sit Ins: How Four Friends Stood Up By Sitting Down* (Pinkney, 2010), *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (Weatherford, 2007), *A Taste of Colored Water* (Faulkner, 2008), and *White Water* (Bandy & Strickland, 2011) while formulating questions directly related to several of the pieces of authentic literature used during the unit of study focusing on the Civil Rights Movement. Jasmine’s responses were also evidence of her own intertextual thinking as she connected many pieces of authentic literature together to create her questions. This was evidence of how the intertextually connected pieces of authentic literature influenced her thinking.

As the participants learned through authentic literature and meaningful writing, their responses became much deeper and substantial. Evidence of this was found in a variety of sources. As students continued to learn through the units of study, these responses continued to grow thus demonstrating how their content area knowledge had
evolved. The participants also progressed so that they were able to cite evidence to support their responses and their thinking.

**Citing Evidence to Support Responses**

As the participants’ content knowledge evolved, they began citing evidence to support their responses. This showed that their content knowledge had evolved to the point that not only were they able to draw their own conclusions, but they were also able to support these conclusions with what they had learned from reading various intertextually connected texts. While at the beginning of the study, much support was needed for the participants to include this evidence in their responses, it became more natural as the study progressed. This was shown during the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement.

As citing evidence became more natural, the participants provided this support not only when it was a requirement but also naturally. They began to cite evidence to support their responses in a way that was substantial as the participants progressed through the units of study. This was first observed with Fabian during third unit of study. His knowledge of the content was great enough that he was able to infer about the feelings of those involved. Fabian wrote that Civil Rights meant “that black and white people were separate.” He knew this because “a white person was playing with a black person when they weren’t allowed to.” He continued by making an inference. He wrote, “An inference I can make is that white people might feel nervous because their parents might know they have a black friend” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Fabian was citing evidence from a book he had read while creating his Civil Rights Share Fair Poster.
The book, *Across the Alley* (Michelson, 2005) tells the story of two boys who live across the alley from each other but are not supposed to be friends. Fabian’s inference is directly connected to this book, and he cited evidence for thinking that white people might be nervous with the reasoning of their parents finding out that they have a black friend.

Diego’s content knowledge also evolved and was cited with the evidence for the first time during the Civil Rights Movement unit of study. Diego wrote that Civil Rights meant that “black people cannot be worth white people.” The evidence he cited was that “blacks and whites did not like each other. They should be friends because they are still humans. Rosa went on the front of the bus but that she took a white seat. She had to get off and go to the back of the bus, but she had to pay in the front of the bus and then walk to the back.” He too was able to make an inference demonstrating his evolution of content knowledge. His content knowledge had evolved past being factual. He wrote, “Maybe it hurt their feelings. It is like bullying. That is going to hurt someone’s feelings (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Diego was now bringing in his own experiences and knowledge and connecting these to what was being learned in social studies because this was not shared explicitly in any of the pieces of intertextually connected authentic literature. This is a practice that could not be done accurately and substantially, as shown with Fabian and Diego, without adequate content knowledge.

Through their learning, the participants were showing the importance of sharing their thinking while supporting their thoughts with what they had learned through the various texts they had read and what they had learned about. While in the beginning of
the study, participants had to be asked and guided to support their thinking with evidence from the text, they began to do this naturally and without prompting. This was just one way that the participants’ knowledge or learning evolved.

Enhancement of Learning

The participants used metacognitive thinking to analyze their learning and felt that learning intertextually enhanced their learning. For example, I asked the participants if they felt that learning with multiple texts changed their learning of content area material and also what they thought would have happened if I would have read just one book in a day. Mia felt she learned more through intertextually connected texts than she would if she would have learned with just one text (Interview, September 30, 2013).

R: What if I just would have read one book a day? Would you have learned the same? Would you have learned less? or Would you have learned more?
M: I think I would have learned less.
R: Why do you think that?
M: Because I would learn less because it really wouldn’t make sense to me because I wouldn't really get it. I wouldn’t really get the big idea as much. So, I would be like, OK that’s what happened and then umm. . . yea, that’s what I know.
R: When I read two books to you, do you feel like you understood what you were learning in social studies?
M: I understood a lot.
R: Can you tell me more about what you understood?
M: I understood the facts that we were studying. (Interview, September 30, 2013)

Mia indicated that learning with intertextually connected authentic literature aided in learning various facts in social studies class. Although the participants recorded facts they heard while reading in their Listening Logs, they were not given a list of facts that they needed to memorize or learn. Mia’s response shows how while utilizing intertextually connected authentic literature for instruction, the participants’ knowledge was enhanced.

Mia connected her learning to her own experiences; this was enhanced as multiple forms of intertextually connected authentic literature were utilized as sources for instruction. Not only did Mia make reference to how the intertextually connected authentic literature allowed her to connect to her own experiences, but she also referenced how this enhanced her learning and understanding. Evidence for this was found as she specifically reflected on her learning in the Immigration unit of study. In this interview she said:

I really get it because if you read one book, one at a time, I wouldn’t really get it, but the two books, I would get it. It reminds me of The Name Jar (Choi, 2003), I got that and then with the other books. The books make me feel like yea, people from Franklin are from different countries and stuff, and they came here so it makes more sense. So, I felt that it was really good. (Interview, September 30, 2013)

Mia referred to The Name Jar, a picture book that tells the story of a family who moves to the United States from Korea. Unhei is teased by the children about her name and
decides to try and find a new name. This book was paired with *My Name is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2003) which is also about a young girl from Korea. Yoon goes through a similar experience as Unhei in searching for her identity and deciding who she wants to be. Mia made connections between these two characters from Korea and the diverse population at Franklin Elementary. She recognized that her classmates were also from a wide variety of countries.

Mia continued to think that reading multiple texts was helpful in furthering her learning. However, she herself, noted that this varied. Sometimes it stretched her thinking and made it difficult because she had to make more decisions and other times it furthered her learning. She discussed this; she also talked about how the books were paired.

R: Which pair of books were the easiest?

M: *Brave Girl* and Elizabeth [*Who Says Women Can’t Be Doctors*] because basically it was the same thing because Elizabeth wanted to be a doctor so obviously she was brave, and Clara was easy too because she was brave because she was beat.

R: Which pair was the hardest?

M: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* because there were a lot of interesting things, and I had a lot of decisions to make.

R: Would it have been easier if you would have only read one book?

M: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)
*The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (Kamkwamba & Mealer, 2012) is a picture book that tells the story of William Kamkwamba who at the age of fourteen helped his village in Malawi survive a drought that had had great influence on his village. He spent hours in the library and through his research, created a windmill out of junkyard scraps to provide electricity and food to his village.

Mia’s response was interesting because the picture book had been paired with an informational piece of text on Kamkwamba. This informational text was one page, front and back, and was copied from the back of the book for all students so that they could interact with the text by underlining, highlighting, and making marginal notes while reading. This additional piece of text reaffirmed what was presented in the picture book while also adding additional information. After interacting with both the picture book and the informational piece of text, the participants were to write in their Step books about something that surprised them, something they could connect to, and something they wanted to remember. I asked Mia if she thought that having to address three tasks lent to her feeling that she had a lot of decisions to make, but she was not sure.

The way *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* was paired was the same way as the way the students read about their chosen person for their biographical poems, except for the biographical poems were done independently and without instruction. I wanted to know more about this:

R: What about for the poem?

M: I found it helpful to read both pieces for the poem because if you read the book (*Poppy Lady*), and you thought you learned and then you could read
the other piece and learn more. It didn’t make it harder to make decisions.

It was a good book, too.

R: So what do you think is the difference?

M: In *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, I was confused. It was too much.

There were a lot of interesting things, and I had to pick one. In the *Poppy Lady*, it was only a few interesting things you learned about. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

Perhaps Mia’s response had something to do with the way the texts were written. In talking with Mia, it seemed that she felt the informational piece about William Kamkwamba provided quite a bit more information than when she read the information text about Moina Belle, the “Poppy Lady.” The informational text on Moina Belle really reaffirmed what was shared in the picture book but in a way that was purely expository, while the piece on William Kamkwamba actually added additional information in the nonfiction piece.

There was another student who shared the same thoughts on these two texts. Talia found *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* to be difficult for the very same reason. She shared that because one of the texts was written in a format that was more like a story, it was confusing that the other text was written in a format that was informational. She also found it difficult that so many new facts were added on “the paper” (informational text). Like Mia, Talia also shared that she found that the book she read for her biographical poem, *Mary Walker Wears Pants* was much easier to understand
because the informational text really reaffirmed what was in the picture book, rather than adding a lot of new facts (Interview, November 10, 2013).

Dymetrus talked about how helpful the second text was for him for his biographical poem project, as well. He shared that the informational text I gave him with his picture book made it really easy for him to know what his person was most known for. He told me about Walter Anderson:

He is most known for his Horn Island Watercolors. Both pieces helped because they were written differently. I could get most of the information from the picture book but when I read the other piece, I could understand it better. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

When I asked him about being able to understand better with the other piece, he shared that the picture book did not have as many facts so when he read the informational piece, which had many more facts, it made it much easier to understand about Walter Anderson.

Kayla also discussed how she felt her learning was different when reading two books about the topics studied than just one:

R: Think about the books. Think about how I didn’t just read you one book, but I read you two books together. What did you think about that? What did that do to your learning?

K: I think it made it more clear. It was easier to find the main idea in both stories. If you read just one, it would be harder but when you read both stories, it made it easier.

R: So you thought that the second story made your understanding firmer?
K: Yes. (Interview, September 30, 2013)

Hassan also felt that he learned more by reading two books. He gave the reason that he was given more details by reading more than one book. He also said that when we read books about different things, his learning changed. He said:

Some books are different. In some books, people might immigrate with the ship, but other people immigrate with an airplane. People might get to go to a better school sometimes. They are different because some people immigrate to go to school and when you immigrate, people don’t know your name that fast.

(Interview, September 30, 2013)

He also shared that he learned about different viewpoints and different meanings when he read more than one piece of text. Hassan’s responses were evidence of learning and thinking in an intertextual manner as he incorporated several of the texts read throughout the first unit of study into his response. His response represented books that addressed the journey those who immigrate make: *Grandfather’s Journey, Ziba Came on a Boat, When Jessie Came Across the Sea, and Good-bye Havana! Hola New York!* He also discussed how often times people who immigrate are able to go to a better school and how sometimes those who immigrate have to consider their name. These concepts were addressed in *The Name Jar and My Name is Yoon.*

Luis talked about how it was beneficial to read two books. At first, he thought about this in respect to time and also how the pictures in the picture books enhanced his understanding:
R: Now, I want you to think about how we used picture books, and how we used two picture books when we were reading. What did you think about that?

L: I liked it. I liked that there were pictures because if there weren’t pictures, we wouldn't have understood it. There was liberty, the Statue of Liberty, and if they didn’t show it, we wouldn’t have known that it was going to be new.

R: What about the fact that I read two books to you instead of one? What did you think about that?

L: mmm. . . It was kind of good because if we would have just read one book in One day, it would take us two months.

[My intentions for reading two books in one class period did not have anything to do with time. What I really wanted to know from Luis is if reading two books had any influence on his learning.]

R: Remember, I read two picture books each class. So I would like you to think about me reading two books rather than just reading one. I did that for a reason, but I want to know what you thought about that. What did you think about that and your learning? Do you think that helped your learning? Do you think that it really didn’t make much of a difference in your learning? What did you think about it?

L: It helped us learn.

R: Why? What did it help with?

L: You read a lot from the two books about immigration.

R: So how did that change your learning?
L: Instead of one book, you should read two books because two books would be better.

R: OK, but why?

L: Two books are better.

R: What could you do with two books that you couldn’t do with one book?

L: You couldn’t make connections with one book!

R: What did you think about those connections and your learning?

L: I don’t understand.

R: Do you think those connections had anything to do with your learning?

L: mmm. . . .

R: Do you think it helped your learning? Do you think it made it harder for you to learn? Do you think . . .

L: It made it easier.

R: Can you tell me anything about that?

L: No.

R: Why do you think it made it easier for you to learn?

L: Because when you make connections, even in the books, we didn’t have to write the same things twice. You learned about it more. (Interview, September 30, 2013)

Throughout the study, the participants’ enhanced learning of the content they were studying was evident in many ways. One example of this was shown in their biographical poem. It was clear that the participants had a deep understanding of the
person they researched. By a “deep” understanding, I mean an understanding that reaches beyond the surface level. This is an understanding that stretches beyond mere facts and also encompasses character traits and feelings. This type of understanding brings in an aesthetic lens to what the participants were learning with intertextually connected authentic literature. If they did not have this deep understanding, they would not have been able to compose a poem, an informational piece, and conduct an intertextual analysis (Artifact, November 6, 2013; Questionnaire, November 6, 2013).

While writing an informational piece engaged the participants in writing in an efferent stance, as they incorporated facts they felt were important, composing a biographical poem in a similar manner to a diamante poem, required the participants to take an aesthetic stance as they not only incorporated physical traits but also personality traits. In order to do this successfully, they had to have knowledge of the person they were writing about in a manner that allowed them to actually “know” their subject as a person, rather than just a historical figure. They would have to grapple with these facts and this knowledge to create their biographical poem. As these interviews show, the participants were also becoming aware of their own learning and how learning through intertextually authentic literature and meaningful writing enhanced their learning.

This was just one of many examples where the participants’ learning was enhanced. Another example that was clearly evident was when the participants researched two picture books intertextually connected based off of the Civil Rights Movement. The participants created a Share Fair poster with their partner to represent their learning. At the Share Fair, they taught the other students about what they had
learned. They were able to do so by simply referring to their poster. They were not required to compose a script or notes to guide them in their presentation. Although not required and not necessarily needed, some of the participants showed others the books they had read as a way to present what actually enhanced their learning. “I heard them say ‘See...’ and explain various aspects of the books as they shared what they had learned. However, they shared what they had learned without actually rereading the books and many students actually shared without reading from their posters. This indicated that the participants really knew what they had studied rather than just regurgitating information in a literal manner” (Field Notes, November 21, 2013, pp. 101–102). After participating in the Civil Rights Share Fair, the participants’ learning was further enhanced in the next, and final unit of study.

During the final unit of study, the participants worked independently to compose their own picture book. This picture book was to be intertextually connected to the two books they had used for their research on the Civil Rights Movement and presented in their Share Fair poster. After analyzing these Tri-Text picture books, it was found that the participants’ learning was further enhanced. The participants had to not only know various facts about the Civil Rights Movement, but they also had to integrate these facts into a historical fiction picture book connected to two other picture books. To be able to do this successfully, the participants needed to have sophisticated knowledge of their content and also of the way books were intertextually connected. Twenty-one out of twenty-two (96%) participants were able to compose their Tri-Text picture book successfully and include the required number of facts in their composition in a proficient
manner (Artifact, December 20, 2013). Further evidence of this enhanced learning was found after the participants participated in the intertextual analysis for their Tri-Text picture book creations (Artifact, December 20, 2013).

Although each participant had written their Tri-Text picture book independently, they wrote their book on the same topic as the person who they had worked with in the previous unit of study. After the participants completed an intertextual analysis with this person, they completed a final questionnaire. These questionnaires were further evidence of how their learning had been enhanced from learning through intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing.

While twenty-one of the twenty-two participants (96%) who participated in the study, demonstrated content knowledge on the Civil Rights Movement that was enhanced, this varied in degree from participant to participant (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013; Questionnaire, November 22, 2013; Questionnaire, December 20, 2013; Artifact, December 19, 2013). Two examples of this variance in content knowledge are presented by sharing the results of Song and Talia.

Prior to beginning the study on the Civil Rights Movement, Song shared that she did not know what Civil Rights meant to her (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). After reading *Ruth and the Green Book*, she responded that Civil Rights meant “to help people and make” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). This response was not necessarily surprising as Song was an English language learner who had moved to the United States from Nepal in 2012 and spoke limited English. After learning through intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing during the third unit of study,
Song’s knowledge was enhanced as her response was that Civil Rights meant “white people hate black people because black people do a . . .” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Song was also successful in creating a Tri-Text picture book extending from the Share Fair poster she created with her partner. Her poster and picture book were focused on *Ron’s Big Mission* (Blue & Naden, 2009) and *Richard Wright and the Library Card* (Miller, 1999). Her book connected well to these two picture books as she told the story of an eleven-year-old boy named Baal Veel who loved to read books. This young boy asked Mr. Ram, the library man, for a library card. The library man was very stern and told Baal Veel, “No way because you are a black person!” Baal Veel was sent to the principal’s office because he jumped on a chair. Luckily, the principal wanted all children to learn so he gave all of the children library cards (Artifact, December 19, 2013). This story, composed by Song, connected to the two picture books in that it was about children who were not allowed to have library cards during the time of the Civil Rights Movement. Song was able to take what she learned while composing her Tri-Text picture book as she completed her questionnaire. This time she wrote that to her, Civil Rights meant “that white people hate black people and black people do not get to get a library card or a library book” (Questionnaire, December 20, 2013). Although her Tri-Text picture book and her questionnaire response were both short in length, they demonstrated that her knowledge had been enhanced from learning through intertextually connected authentic literature and writing. Song was the only one whose knowledge was enhanced after participating in the fourth unit of study where they composed a Tri-Text picture book.
Talia was also able to successfully compose a Tri-Text picture book. Her learning was further enhanced as was evidenced in her writing. She wrote the following:

Blacks and whites were not allowed to be together because of the Jim Crowe Law. Blacks had messed up schools, no library, the roofs always leaked when it rained, and whites had clean schools. Blacks and whites had different drinking fountains, bathrooms, theaters, and even restaurants. Blacks and whites could go on the same bus but would sit in different places.

(Questionnaire, December, 20, 2013)

Talia also included the following facts, “The Civil Rights were messed up because slavery was gone, but then segregation came in. I don’t get how it started”

(Questionnaire, December, 20, 2013).

These are just a few of the many forms of evidence of students’ knowledge being enhanced as they experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and writing. Their knowledge was enhanced as shared in their various responses which supported that their content knowledge had evolved over time. Students’ performance also indicated that their learning in the content areas was real and relevant with this type of learning.

**Learning in the Content Areas is Real and Relevant**

Not only did participants’ content knowledge evolve, but their learning in the content areas was real and relevant as they learned through intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing. Rather than the participants learning in the content areas in a way in which they felt disconnected, they learned in a way that was real as well as relevant to them. This “real” learning stretched beyond memorization and
regurgitation of facts and often included aesthetic learning, connected with the content area that they were learning in.

Some participants felt that the type of writing they were doing also made learning in the content areas more real and relevant. During the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement, the participants wrote a newspaper article using figurative language. The participants had practiced writing with figurative language after reading a paired text centering on the Greensboro Sit-Ins during the Civil Rights Movement. These books were *Sit In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (Pinkney, 2010) and *Freedom on the Menu* (Weatherford, 2007). The first book is told in a metaphor, comparing segregation, integration, and the sit-ins to a recipe. While *Freedom on the Menu* also tells the story of the Greensboro Sit-Ins, the same metaphorical writing style is not used. The participants practiced writing with figurative language as they rewrote part of *Freedom on the Menu* but this time while integrating figurative language. They also added visual representation to their finished piece.

Later in the unit, they applied writing with figurative language again as they wrote a newspaper article about a famous black athlete. They could choose from Jackie Robinson, Annie Taylor, Satchel Paige, or Major Taylor. These four black athletes were those in which the participants learned about when reading controlling texts and completing a matrix to guide them to determining similarities and differences amongst the four athletes.

To be considered successful, the participants needed to compose a piece that met three criteria: 1) The publication needed to communicate the important attributes and
accomplishments of the person they chose to focus on from their matrix. 2) The piece needed to incorporate figurative language in a manner that enhanced the story told by the author. 3) The newspaper article had to be written in a manner that was detailed, substantial, and coherent.

Of the twenty-two participants, only two (9%) of the participants turned in writing that was incomplete or limited and did not communicate the important facts about the famous black athlete; however, one of these two newspaper articles did include figurative language in a manner that was cohesive and added to the piece. Five (23%) of the participants met the first and third requirements set forth in that they composed a piece that was detailed, substantial and coherent while sharing the important accomplishments of the black athlete they chose to write about; however, they did not incorporate figurative language into their newspaper article. Fifteen of the twenty-two (68%) participants met all three criteria for being successful. Thus, the majority of the participants met this complex challenge.

Monique brought up this learning experience during one of our interviews. Not only was Monique successful at composing and publishing a newspaper article (see Figure 5), she also enjoyed the experience. She used the previous experience with the Greensboro Sit-Ins to guide her through the process of writing a newspaper article:

R: Out of all of the projects that we did during this unit, which did you like the best?

M: I loved the newspaper because it was like you were there. That is when your imagination starts working. You can think, ok it is a newspaper. Then you
can be a writer and combine the facts I know and talk about it there. I kind of like the newspaper more because you were writing the facts down, and you were publishing it so it was like a real paper, and you could combine it together and learn more.

R: Did you think it was hard to include figurative language in your writing?

M: At first I didn’t know what it was. Then when I thought of this book [Sit-In: *How Four Friends Stood Up While Sitting Down*], and I thought . . .

figurative language. Yeah I had a hard time with that one but then when I was putting in the facts and doing what I was good at, I thought figurative language is just putting information in how you could see and connect to that person. (Interview, November 24, 2013)

Even though Monique felt this task was difficult, she was able to perform successfully as were many of the participants.

Monique shared this experience in a way that represented her learning as being real and relevant. Further evidence of this was found throughout the study and is presented in two subthemes, aesthetic responses and an intimate understanding of content.
Aesthetic Responses

Throughout the study the participants responded aesthetically to their reading and their learning. These types of responses show not only how the participants’ knowledge of content area material evolved but how their learning of content area material became real to them. These responses became more natural as the participants progressed through the study.

The participants responded aesthetically and included feelings and also opinions in their responses. Because an aesthetic stance requires the reader to pull from their own experiences and often times includes the readers’ feelings and opinions, this lends to
learning in the content areas being more real and relevant. This was evidenced as early as the first unit of study.

After learning about immigration through intertextually connected authentic literature and writing, the participants were asked what the word immigration meant to them and what facts made them think this. Dymetrus responded:

Immigration means to me when people travel to another country because they probably have a war going on or their government has too much power, or they burn down homes killing humans, and it was horrible and then they immigrated. They were sad while traveling. (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013)

He cited the following facts for his response:

People are sad when they travel – it is called homesick. They have to immigrate for a better life. Governments have too much power. Some were forced to leave their homes. Some came to see their brother or sister. They traveled to America because a war could be going on. They had to learn English, and it was pretty hard to learn it. The trip took 27 days to get to America. Some were helping Jews in America like in Emma’s poem. They have to get a job for some money to buy stuff like food and stuff. (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013)

Since Dymetrus’s initial response was that immigration meant “other people from other countries that come to America” (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013), there was certainly an evolution of content knowledge. Not only had his content knowledge evolved, but even more importantly, it was presented in an aesthetic response.
Monique made inferences about immigration that were aesthetic in nature. She wrote, “Some immigrants don’t know how to write their name in English and some don’t have citizenship like regular Americans, and some don’t fit in” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). It was inferred in some of the books read that those immigrating to the United States had difficulty fitting in, but it was not directly stated. By Monique sharing this in her responses, she was bringing in her own background knowledge to draw this conclusion. I wanted to be sure that this indeed was Monique’s intention and that I was not drawing these conclusions and making these inferences for her, so I talked with her during a member check.

During this member check, Monique talked about the inferences she made and how she brought in her own experiences to draw her conclusions. She shared:

I know some of our family who lived in Puerto Rico and came here. Learning about immigration helped me understand what my own family had to go through to move here. It helped me put it all together, like the pieces of a puzzle. When I put it all together, it was complete, and I had a complete understanding of immigration. I liked learning this way. Yes, I used my own experiences. I actually used them all on my own, in a way that would help me make sense. (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013)

As with Monique, Luis showed aesthetic thinking in the first unit of study. This was in a natural and unsolicited manner. During an interview, Luis was asked what he thought about the Immigration unit. He responded, “I feel bad for immigration because they had to leave their country from the war, and they had to come be doing hard stuff”
(Interview, September 30, 2013). Luis was responding aesthetically. He used his feelings by saying that he felt “bad for immigration” when he talked about those who immigrated to the United States.

At the end of the study, the participants were asked how they connected to social studies (Artifact, December 20, 2013). All twenty-two students shared that they felt they did connect with social studies. This was a sharp contrast to how they felt at the beginning of the study when many responded that they did not connect to social studies. Some of the participants gave reasons that were aesthetic in nature for their ability to connect to this specific content area. Angel referenced the first unit of study focusing on immigration in her response. She wrote, “I connect with Gabriella in *Good-bye Havana, Hola New York* because we both feel the same way leaving our country and going to America, and I feel homesick already” (Artifact, December 20, 2013). It was evident that Angel was responding aesthetically and making connections to her own life as she had also moved to the United States and felt homesick. Angel continued to talk about how hard it was to leave your home and your grandma. This specific unit was one Angel connected to. Although this response was written at the end of the study, it referenced the first unit of study which was conducted over three months previously. This unit had made a lasting impression in how Angel viewed social studies.

The participants also responded with how they felt about how others were treated during the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement. They shared their opinions on how others were treated unfairly both in their writing (Artifact, November 11, 13, 22) and also in their conversations. Matida showed an example of this when she wrote in her
TABB book. She had just read *Rosa* (Giovanni, 2007) and *Back of the Bus* (Reynolds, 2010). These two books tell the story of Rosa Parks. However, in the first book, Rosa is shown sitting in the middle of the bus, the section known as the neutral section and a section that blacks were able to sit in. The second book, *Back of the Bus*, showed Rosa sitting in the front of the bus, much as is traditionally learned in schools in the United States. Matida wrote in her TABB book during the Civil Rights unit about Rosa Parks getting arrested in both of the books they read, and how she sat in the front of the bus in one story and in the middle of the bus in the other story. She also added, “I think the way they treated black people was bad because it was not equal and the white people got to sit in the front and that is not fair” (Artifact, November 11, 2013).

Subin also shared her feelings while drawing a conclusion about how black students were treated when they went to white schools. She wrote, “A conclusion I can draw is that they are getting bullied by the white kids, and I feel bad for this” (Artifact, November 13, 2013). Not only did Subin share her conclusion, but she responded to this conclusion by sharing her feelings. She could connect to how they might feel about being treated so poorly and felt bad for this treatment.

As with many of the participants, Jayden also shared about how he could conclude that blacks were not treated very well during this time period. He wrote, “A conclusion I can draw it that they weren’t treated very nicely because the blacks in the white schools got their house shot up, and their windows broke. They were called hateful things” (Artifact, November 13, 2013). His response was another example of how his learning had become real as he used an aesthetic lens in his thinking. It did not say in any
of the books we had read that the black people were called hateful things. He had made this conclusion himself. This conclusion showed that what he learned was real and relevant. He shared this in a manner that was aesthetic in nature.

Another form of evidence of the participants responding aesthetically was found in the participants’ responses and how they talked about bullying. While the words “bullying” and “bullied” were not used in the books or during instruction, many participants included this in their interview responses, artifacts, and questionnaire responses. The participants responded using these words throughout the study. This is considered an aesthetic response because it directly connects to these students’ lives.

Franklin Elementary is located in the urban School District of the City of Grandview. While the eighteen schools in this district vary in terms of diversity and location in the terms of being classified as being inner city, Franklin Elementary is located in one of the most inner city parts of the district and has a very low socio-economic status. Students participate in many intervention programs about interacting with each other with respect so as not to “bully” each other. While students participate in anti-bullying programs through school, they are often still faced with this treatment while in school and also outside of school. Thus, by having so many of the participants using the words “bully” and “bullying” in their responses throughout the study, they were responding aesthetically.

Kayla wrote about this when the participants were asked to reflect on if they used the word “bullied” during the study, and if they did what their reasons were. She wrote:
I used bullying because I have been bullied. When I was at my old school, I was bullied because I had glasses and took an inhaler for a respiratory problem. I also used the word bully because it described the situation better. . . .

(Questionnaire, November 11, 2013)

Having the participants respond using the word bully or bullying seemed natural in the Civil Rights unit of study. However, this word was never used during instruction and was not in any of the pieces of authentic literature read to the participants. The majority of the participants used this word in their responses at some point in the unit. As stated previously, the participants were asked what the words “Civil Rights” meant to them before beginning this unit of study. This was before they had read any books. They were also asked this question again after reading *Ruth and the Green Book*. While many of the participants were now able to respond, none of them used the words “bully” or “bullied” in their response. When completing this questionnaire after reading *Ruth and the Green Book*, eight out of the twenty-two (36%) participants included something about black people being treated bad or unfair (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). Two of the participants phrased this in a question “Why would the black people be treated badly?” (Luis, Questionnaire, November 11, 2013) and “Why did white people treat black people badly? Why did white people not help back people when they were traveling?” (Angel, Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). Two of the other participants included about how black people were treated badly when responding to the question of what “Civil Rights” meant to them after reading the picture book. Subin responded, “What it does to me is the people was mean to the other people so it mean to me that
people want to move” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). Jasmine wrote, “Civil Rights means that people get treated unfairly just because of their skin color” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). Four of the participants made inferences about the black people being treated poorly. Camila wrote, “They treating negroes like their nasty and disgusting” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013), and Jayden wrote, “their family was black and was treated badly” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). Fabian wrote, “They were treated badly. They had the Green Book that could help them out” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013) and Monique wrote “I wrote that they weren’t treated fairly because they were a different color. I also wrote that they felt welcome because they saw people in the same skin” (Questionnaire, November 11, 2013). Some of the participants did respond about how white people treated black people poorly. Even though these eight participants responded in some way about how the black people were treated unfairly or poorly, they did not use the words “bullying.”

When the participants completed interlocking rectangles, an intertextual graphic organizer, after reading *This School is Not White!* (Rappaport, 2005) and *Busing Brewster* (Michelson, 2010), all seventeen participants (100%) who participated in this experience included something about bullying in their responses. Using this term showed how learning this content was real to them as bullying is part of their everyday world. It also showed how they were connecting aesthetically to these two books and to this time period. Both of these books tell about black children who attend white schools and how they are treated at the schools. They also show how deplorable the black schools were in comparison to the white schools. While the children’s mother in the first book asked for
her children to attend the white school, the boys in the second book actually received a letter telling them to go to the black school. In both books, the children were yelled at, had rocks and other objects thrown at them, and were called names. Evidence of these events, and how students made natural connections to what they read in an aesthetic manner was found throughout their responses.

Camila talked about how people were treated in great detail during an interview (Interview, November 24, 2013). She also talked about how making connections helped her understand what she was learning:

R: Which unit did you feel the most comfortable with your learning?
C: mmm. . . what does comfortable mean?
R: Sometimes when we make inferences, make connections, and draw conclusions it feels easy or comfortable, and sometimes it is kind of hard.
So out of these three units, which one was easier, or more comfortable, for you to make connections, have conversations, and do the writing we did?
C: The Civil Rights unit.
R: Why do you think that?
C: Because we read a book about Rosa Parks, white schools, and it is easy because they have that inference or that conclusion in there.
R: Yes, but you made those. They weren’t actually in there. You are the one who makes the inferences and draws the conclusions. Why do you think it was easier to make inferences and draw conclusions with those books?
C: . . .
R: Do you feel like it was easier?
C: Yes.
R: Do you have any ideas why?
C: mmm... No.
R: So let’s take a look at your TABB book. You wrote quite a bit in your TABB book, and everything you wrote was on task. What you wrote actually connects really well. Did you find it easier to do the writing?
C: Yes.
R: Why was it easier to write with these books?
C: Because when I read those books, I write like... I get focused like they are impressed to me.
R: They are what?
C: Impressed.
R: What do you mean by that?
C: Like, I love the book White School [This School is Not White!] because it talks about black and white people, and I just write notes about the books I like.
R: Oh, ok, so you liked these books better. Did you feel like you connected to them?
C: Yes.
R: OK. So out of all of these books we used. I grouped these in the pairs that we read in class. Which one did you feel that you connected the most to?
C: I connected the most too?

R: Or which one did you find the easiest?

C: I liked White School [*This School is Not White!*] and *Busing Brewster*.

R: What did you like about those two books?

C: It talked in the books about how they were feeling bullied. They were feeling bullying. They were talking about how they were treating black people and how they cannot get into a white school.

R: They did go to a white school, didn’t they?

C: Yes, but they were being bullied.

R: What were you thinking when we were reading that?

C: When they were being bullied?

R: Yes. What were you thinking?

C: I was thinking like in other schools right now... they are being bullied right now. They are being treated like they are disgusting and all of that.

R: What do you think about that?

C: I think that it is not good.

R: So as I was reading these two books in Mrs. Neff’s class, you made some connections all on your own. Do you remember that?

C: Yes.

R: So, what did you think about these two books? Were they easy or hard for you to understand?

C: They were easy. This book [points to *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up By*}
Sitting Down], I like it either because they show like four gentlemen go to the cafeteria, and they want a coffee and a donut. They are like college students, and they are being bullied, and they throw things in their face. In the other book [points to Freedom on the Menu] that is this one, it is the same as this. The girl has the brother, and the brother is the one. They want the black people to be with the white people because nothing else matters.

Again, Camila talked about the individuals in the books being bullied. She did so in a manner that demonstrated how real her learning was and how it had relevance. She explicitly stated how what we had read and learned about was relevant and connected to her world today. This response began when I asked Camila about how her participation in class had increased:

R: Something I have noticed is as you have been learning through the Civil Rights unit, you have been able to participate more. You have been able to share your thinking with us more. Can you tell me about that?

C: When you read, Ruth and the Green Book. That surprised me. They were being treated like they were treated in the book White School [This School is Not White!]. They were being bullied. They cannot use the bathroom, restroom, or get in a hotel. And . . . . they want to visit their grandma, but they can’t in the way they are being treated. . . being bullied like in White School [This School is Not White] and Busing Brewster and in Sit-In [Sit In: How Four Friends Stood Up By Sitting Down] those three books. I like them more because they talk about more than they are. They talk about how they
are treated. They are being bullied. The white people are being disrespectful.

... they say things that aren’t true, they are being liked bullying, they are being
treated like disgusting like they are garbage.

R: So when I read things like that, you are able to participate more because
C: Because I like the way they talk about them about the way they are being
treated and like those books I like it when they talk about black and white
because they make me think where we are right now.

R: What does that make you think?
C: That makes me think of diversity and where we are right now.
R: So you are connecting it to today.
C: Yes.
R: Did I hear that right?
C: Yes. (Interview, November 24, 2013)

Some of the participants coupled talking about how there was bullying during the
time period of the Civil Rights to how they felt about this bullying. When Fabian wrote
in his TABB book, he wrote, “in both stories, the black people get bullied at the white
schools. They get pushed around. They feel sad because bullying is not nice” (Artifact,
November 11, 2013). Fabian took what he read in the two books, combined it with what
he knew to formulate the word “bully” and then even went a step further by responding
with how those students actually felt.

Although there was certainly an abundance of talking about the Civil Rights and
using the word “bully” or “bullying,” this was not the only time the participants used
these words. Jasmine wrote about Philo Farnsworth after creating her biographical poem and participating in the intertextual analysis. Not only had her knowledge grown from not knowing anything about Philo Farnsworth (Questionnaire, October 25, 2013), but she showed that the content was real and relevant when telling what she knew about Philo. She wrote, “My person is Philo Farnsworth. He made TV. He had a wife, but his wife and him were not married anymore because she thought he was too much of a dreamer. He got to show other famous inventors the television. He got bullied when he was a kid until he was an adult. Then he was famous and on every newspaper he was on it” (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013).

Throughout the study, the participants responded in an aesthetic manner, bringing in what they knew from their life and from their own experiences. They did so by responding aesthetically and in a manner that implicitly communicated that what they were learning was not only real to them, but it was also relevant. They also communicated in a manner that demonstrated they had an intimate understanding of the content being studied during the various units of study.

**An Intimate Understanding of Content**

The content being more relevant and real was also evidenced in how the participants responded with an intimate understanding. By having an intimate understanding, the participants demonstrated that they had a personal understanding of what they were learning. This was evidenced in multiple places throughout the study. One example of evidence was found in talking with Kayla. When Kayla talked about which intertextually connected books she liked most in the Hallmark People unit of
study, she responded that she liked the books about the pilots. These books, *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride* (Ryan, 1999), *Brave Harriet: The First Woman to Fly the English Channel* (Moss, 2001), *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee* (Moss, 2009), *Nobody Owns the Sky: The Story of Brave Bessie Coleman* (Lindbergh, 1998) were all focused on female pilots. Amelia Earhart was used for the benchmark text because out of all the pilots, she was probably the most familiar. While a few of the participants had heard of Amelia Earhart, the participants had not heard of the other female pilots (Field Notes, October 11, 2013). As a controlling text, the other texts were arranged around *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*. All of the participants read *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride* and then one of the other books. Kayla shared her reasoning for choosing these intertextually connected texts as her favorite in an interview. She talked about the women she had learned about as if she knew them, thus showing an intimate understanding of the content:

R: Let’s talk about the books first. Which pair of books or set of books did you like the best?

K: The planes.

R: What did you like about those?

K: I liked that all of them had a sense of spirit.

R: Tell me more about that.

K: Even though people said they didn’t care, or they couldn’t do it, they kept their heads held high, and they knew they could do it. (Interview, November, 10, 2013)
Kayla not only understood the accomplishments the pilots made, she also thought of them as real people by talking about them in this manner. Kayla’s learning was real and relevant to her, as she had an intimate understanding of the female pilots they had learned about. This was reaffirmed later in the interview.

R: Out of these two units, which one did you like the best?

K: The Hallmark People.

R: Why is that?

K: Because I liked doing all of these cool things about people I didn’t know. I didn’t know about Elizabeth Blackwell. I didn’t know about Henry Box Brown. I didn’t know about the Boy Who Harnessed the Wind.

It is just pretty cool to see all of these new people.

R: Did you like learning about people more than you liked learning about an event?

S: Yes. I did like learning more about people.

R: Do you know why?

S: I like meeting new people. So this was a little fun because I got to do fun activities with this. I just never did this before. (Interview, November, 10, 2013)

Even though, Kayla learned about these people through books we read, she talked about them as if she had met them and learned directly from them rather than only reading about them. Her words represented how her learning of the content was real, relevant. She also connected what she was learning to her world. In an entry in her TABB book
foldable, she wrote “A conclusion I can draw is that these stories lead to what’s now because in both books it said kids started going to white schools” (Artifact, November 13, 2013).

Several of the participants connected what they were learning in social studies to their own lives. Different than the aesthetic responses noted previously, these participants explicitly made these connections to themselves. By doing this, they showed that they knew about these connections and that their learning was real and relevant and that they had an intimate understanding of what they were learning. An example of this was Subin who wrote “I am an immigrant. I am from somewhere different than the USA (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). However, some of the participants indicated that learning in the first unit of study about immigration helped them learn about themselves and also how they may help others. Hiba wrote, “It made me learn that I am from another country. I am an immigrant. I can help people to like other immigrants” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). The participants also connected what they were learning about immigration to the world around them today. When asked what questions the participants had about immigration, Jasmine wrote, “How do immigrants get treated now a days? How many immigrants came to America? What types of places do immigrants come from?” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013).

For the participants to be able to respond in this fashion, they needed to have an intimate understanding of the content they were learning. They responded in ways where they talked about the individuals they were studying as if they were actually real people, people who they knew in a personal way. They made direct connections to what they
were learning and themselves. Their understanding of the content was intimate and deep and their learning was real and relevant.

**The Evolution of Literate Behaviors**

Throughout this study, many literate behaviors evolved that aided the participants in being successful. While at the beginning of the study, Mrs. Neff and I had to provide guidance and support to engage the participants in literate behaviors, the participants evolved to applying many of these literate behaviors on their own. These literate behaviors are presented in five subthemes: following multi-step directions, providing detailed, deep, and substantial answers, citing textual evidence to support answers, developing vocabulary, drawing conclusions, making inferences, using symbolism, and asking thought-provoking questions.

**Following Multi-Step Directions**

In the beginning of the study, the participants struggled following multi-step directions, even when these steps were written for them on guideline pages or on the board. For example, for the first unit of study, the participants recorded their thinking and learning in an interactive foldable. This interactive foldable was in the form of a poof book. Entries for this foldable often involved the participants responding to more than one task.

One of the most prominent examples of this occurred after the participants read *Small Beauties: The Journey of Darcy Heart O’Hara* (Woodruff, 2006) and *The Matchbox Diary* (Fleicshman, 2013). These two books were paired because each showed how treasures, or “small beauties” were important to people who immigrated to the
United States because they helped these people remember their culture, their family, and where they lived. First, the participants were asked to engage in a “sketch to stretch” (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988). This learning experience is one that encourages students to create visualizations in their mind and then draw these visualizations to help them interpret meaning of the text they are reading. It gives students the opportunity to make connections between what they are reading and their own life experiences. This activity was used with the purpose of giving the participants a technique to guide their thinking.

Once the participants created their “sketch to stretch,” they were to write a response to the following questions: “What is the main idea of these two stories?” and “What stands out to you?” Twenty participants responded to these questions. Of the twenty participants, only two (10%) responded to both questions. Although only two of the participants responded to both questions, they really did not communicate the main idea of the book. Camila wrote “Both stories the two girls go to America in a boat. Is important to me because the two girls ride a new life in the boat” (Artifact, September 9, 2013) and Subin wrote “They were being mean to her. It stands out to me because it is sad” (Artifact, September 9, 2013). A few of the participants gave responses that were reasonable but only answered one of the two questions. For example, Talia responded in a reasonable manner when she wrote “They both had something to remember about their home countries. In Small Beauties she had a flower and a rock and in Matchbox Diary he had box matches full of stuff” (Artifact, September 9, 2013) and Jayden wrote “I think the main ideas were about the treasures like the matchboxes and the bead” (Artifact, September 9, 2013). Even though these two participants responded in a manner that
depicted the main idea, they did not respond to the second question which asked them to write about what stood out to them in the text. Many participants wrote responses that were inaccurate and only addressed one of the two responses. For example, Fabian wrote “I drew a boat because they were in both stories” (Artifact, September 9, 2013), and Kayla wrote “They each collected something” (Artifact, September 9, 2013). These responses were reasonable but they did not convey what was at the heart of these two books.

The participants responding superficially and only to one task continued throughout the first unit of study on Immigration and part way into the second unit of study on Hallmark People. It was during a lesson on Henry “Box” Brown that a change occurred. The participants had read *Henry’s Freedom Box: A True Story of the Underground Railroad* (Levine, 2007) and *Freedom Song: The Story of Henry “Box” Brown* (Walker, 2012). These two books are both based on Henry “Box” Brown, a slave who was separated from his family and later mailed himself to freedom. The participants were to write what they wondered and what connections they made. Not only did the vast majority of the participants respond to both tasks in a reasonable manner, but the majority of the participants provided an answer that was substantial as they not only told what they wondered but also made substantial connections between the two texts. Out of the eighteen participants, seventeen (94%) provided a response that was reasonable and ten (56%) provided a response that was not only reasonable but was also substantial.

In an effort to ensure that there was indeed an improvement in this literate behavior and that it did not just stem from the fact that the two books read were about the
same person, the participants read the book *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing* (Prince, 2005). This book is about P.T. Barnum and how he paraded twenty-one elephants across the Brooklyn Bridge to prove to everyone that it was safe. For this learning experience, the participants had three tasks. First, they were to write a connection they could make between the newly read book and any of the other books that had been read so far during this school year. Second, they were to support their connection by providing two reasons why this was a good connection. Third, the participants were also to represent their writing with a picture.

The majority of the participants were able to complete these multi-step directions successfully. As a matter of fact, out of the twenty participants, eighteen (90%) met all of the requirements of this task. Only two (10%) of the participants’ responses were made at the surface level while eighteen (90%) were significant and/or substantial. Nineteen (95%) of the participants provided visual representation in the form of a picture that connected to their writing. Some of the participants not only drew a picture that accurately depicted their writing, but they drew a picture that represented both the book *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing* and also the book they were connecting it to. This was evident in ten of the twenty (50%) responses. This went above and beyond what they were asked to do and demonstrated intertextual thinking. Other participants went above and beyond in what they actually wrote. Rather than making one connection and supporting it by citing two examples, they made several connections (Artifact, October 23, 2013). In addition, their writing had evolved to being detailed, focused, and descriptive (see Figure 6).
The participants’ ability to complete multiple steps in a project continued to develop and was evident throughout the remainder of the unit on Hallmark People. After the participants read, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, they were to write about

*Figure 6. Kayla’s Twenty-One Elephants Writing.*

I think Phineas T. Barnum is like Hamiet because they were both part of what they did. I like how Hamiet flew in that plane and how one cared because the Titanic sank. Then Phineas got all those elephant across the bridge so everybody would be safe on that bridge.

I think 21 elephant had a connection to The boy who harnessed the wind. Who said girls can’t be doctors and Brave Girl because they were all laughed at. William was laughed at because he was building a windmill out of trash and Elizabeth she was laughed at because she wanted to be a doctor. Last but not least Clara she spotted up but people laughed. That connects with the story because people laughed at Guiness because he wanted to walk 21 elephants across the bridge.
something that surprised them, something they could connect to, and something they wanted to remember. Fifteen out of the eighteen (83%) participants who participated that day, completed all three of the tasks. Seven (39%) did so reasonably and eleven (61%) provided deep or substantial responses. Garrett was able to write in response to all three tasks and made a connection to the first unit of study. He wrote, “The thing that surprised me was that everyone’s food came from the ground. The connection I made were Malawi was running out of food and the immigrants ran out of food. I wondered why they were selling tobacco” (Artifact, October, 21, 2013).

As the participants’ literate behaviors evolved, some participants began to address each of the steps naturally in their writing. For example in the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement, the participants were asked a similar question to what they were asked in the first unit of study. They were asked what the big idea of the books they had read were and to tell why they thought this. They had read texts paired using a controlling connection. These books centered on black American athletes. The books read were Dad, Jackie and Me (Uhlberg, 2010), Major Taylor, Champion Cyclist (Cline-Ransome, 2004), Queen of the Track: Alice Coachman, Olympic High Jump Champion (Lang, 2012), and Satchel Paige (Cline-Ransome, 2003). Fabian wrote, “They all are black athletes because they do sports like baseball, basketball, football, track and field, and soccer. Some blacks get picked on. Some were brave like Jackie Robinson because he got spiked, and he got up and did it again” (Artifact, November 15, 2013). Monique also supported her response with her thinking when she wrote, “The big idea is even though white people segregated them, they still chased their dreams and sent a message
to others that even if people doubt them, still chase your dream. The world’s best ambitious athletes” (Artifact, November 15, 2013).

Many participants’ responses were substantial in representing their thinking. For example, Jasmine responded “I thought that they were all very strong athletes because they all got hurt one way or another. For example, Jackie Robinson got spiked very hard on his leg, but he kept playing. Alice Coachman got hurt when she was in the Olympics, and her back was hurt. But they all kept going” (Artifact, November 15, 2013). Garrett wrote, “In all of the stories, the black athletes ignored what the people were saying about them. When they were talking about the athletes, the athletes ignored it. The athletes accomplished their dreams because they didn’t give up” (Artifact, November 15, 2013). Matida was specific and detailed in her response when she talked about the big idea. She wrote, “They all connect to each other because they all won an award. Jackie Robinson – baseball hall of fame in 1962. Major Taylor – 1900 world champion races. Alice Coachman – gold medal. Satchel Paige – baseball hall of fame” (Artifact, November 15, 2013).

All of these students naturally depicted the big idea of the books read while supporting their answer by citing evidence from the texts they read. In doing this, they were able to make substantial connections across the authentic literature that was read. They did this in a manner that was natural, accurate, and detailed and not only met the multi-step directions given to them but exceeded them.
Citing Textual Evidence

The participants cited evidence when asked to in multi-step directions and also began to employ the practice of citing evidence on their own, without prompting. This is considered to be a literate behavior because it plays a part in literacy many times. Often when discussing efferent and aesthetic responses to what readers read, evidence to support these responses is provided by referring to what was read from the book. This is a way to show what the reader’s thinking is valuable and credible.

The practice of the participants naturally citing evidence to support their responses and their thinking was evidenced for the first time at the end of the first unit of study. For example, when Kiara responded to what the word immigration meant to her after participating in the first unit of study, she responded first by writing “Immigration means for someone to move to a different country.” She continued by naturally citing evidence to support her thinking. “For an example in Good-bye Havana, Hola New York, Gabriella had to move to New York because there were problems in Cuba” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). Kiara wrote what immigration meant to her, how Gabriella had to move, and even the reason for why Gabriella had to move. This was done naturally and without prompting. It stretched beyond the question asked of her.

In Kiara’s response, she referred to the book Good-bye Havana, Hola New York (Colon, 2011) and When Jessie Came Across the Sea (Hest, 2003). The first book is about five-year-old Gabriella whose parents move to the Bronx after hearing Castro’s speech about revolution. Months later, Gabriella joins her parents but learns that New York is much, much different than her home in Havana. This book was paired with
When Jessie Came Across the Sea (Hest, 2003) which is the story of a young girl from a poor European village who is asked by the rabbi to travel to America. Jessie must leave her grandmother to do so but is convinced that it an opportunity that she must take advantage of. Both of these books were referred to as the participants answered the question of what immigration meant to them. Kiara also referred to the books Ziba Came on a Boat (Lofthouse, 2007) and Small Beauties: The Journey of Darcy Heart O’Hara which were also read during the Immigration unit of study and told the story of individuals immigrating to the United States. She added these books on her own, without prompting, and remembered their titles to include in her response (Artifact, September 30, 2013).

Angel referred to the book about Jessie from When Jessie Came Across the Sea and also naturally cited evidence from the text read in class for her response, “The word immigration means to me a person who is coming from a different country that comes to America, like from Jessie Came Across the Sea. She came from a country and when they leave, they have to go on a ship. In the story Good-bye Havana, Hola New York!, Gabriella had to leave Cuba because there were problems in Cuba” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013).

While these two participants cited evidence that was specific to the texts read and efferent in nature, other participants cited evidence that was both efferent and aesthetic in nature. After concluding the unit of study focusing on the Civil Rights Movement, Monique wrote, “Civil Rights means to me how black people couldn’t do what white people could do and how blacks couldn’t have an education like we have today.” Her
facts to support this were directly related to the books we read, “In some of our books the black schools had leaks, and they couldn’t really learn anything” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Garrett responded, “Civil Rights means to me free rights, things we can do. So you get to do whatever you want without getting in trouble by someone.” He wrote that the facts he had learned that supported his thinking were “Rosa on the bus. She didn’t get to sit wherever she wanted. She could only sit in the back or middle. Black people didn’t get to do a lot of things.” He made an inference by referencing the books he read, “In both books I read, I think they were getting treated badly. They had to eat salt and work on Salt Island. You could tell he was sad by his face” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013).

Not only did the participants’ ability to cite evidence for their responses evolve throughout the study, but doing so naturally, without prompting, and in a manner that solidified their responses evolved. This was observed through their responses.

**Developing Vocabulary**

Throughout the study, the participants’ vocabulary grew in two ways. First, the participants began to use more sophisticated words in their writing and in their discussion. Second, the participants began to use content-specific words regularly.

An example of this was found while comparing the participants’ responses across the units of study. During the second unit of study, the participants read *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Maker’s Strike of 1909* (Markel, 2013) and *Who Says Women Can’t be Doctors?: The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell* (Stone, 2013). *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Maker’s Strike of 1909* is the story of Clara Lemlich who was an
immigrant from the Ukraine. Clara attended school at night, spent many hours learning how to speak English, and helped support her family by sewing in the shirtwaist factory. It was while doing this work, that she learned that girls were often treated poorly and paid little. She never accepted this and led the largest walkout of women workers in the country. Clara had learned that everyone deserves a fair chance and that you had to stand together and stand up for what you believed in and what you wanted. She also believed that you could do anything that you put your mind to. The book on Clara Lemlich was paired with *Who Says Women Can’t be Doctors: The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell*. This book tells the true story of Elizabeth Blackwell who defied the odds and expectations that women should be wives and mothers and if they were going to work, there were very few career options such as being a seamstress or a teacher. However, Elizabeth felt that women could be much more than others did and was just determined and strong-willed enough to become the first female doctor.

The participants were asked to choose one word to describe both Clara and Elizabeth and to cite evidence why this was an appropriate word. Nine (47%) of the participants said these ladies were brave, five (26%) said they were determined, one (5%) of the participants described them as being shy, one (5%) said they were intelligent, and one (5%) described them using the word hero (Artifact, October 9, 2013). Thus the participants used five different words to describe Clara and Elizabeth.

In the next unit of study, they were asked to perform a similar task after learning about Henry “Box” Brown. While the participants used some of the same words that they had used in the unit previous, their words also encompassed others showing
increased sophistication of their vocabulary. The participants’ responses were also more varied than previously. Seven (39%) of the participants described Henry as brave, and two (11%) said he was courageous. Two (11%) of the participants described Henry as intelligent, and two (11%) described him in a similar manner as being smart. One (6%) participant described Henry as being determined and one (6%) described him as self-sufficient. One (6%) of the participants said that Henry was a singer, and one (6%) said he was quiet (Artifact, October 17, 2013).

Not only were the participants able to use an increased number of words to describe Henry’s character, they were also able to support their word choice with evidence from the two books they had read. Seventeen out of eighteen (94%) of the participants provided reasonable responses with ten out of eighteen (56%) participants providing evidence that was not only reasonable but also substantial in nature.

An example of substantial evidence for his word was written by Dymetrus. He described Henry as being smart. He wrote:

I think he is smart because he thought of an idea. He burned his hand.
He knew the boss would say to come back when it heals. Then he came in a box to Philadelphia to freedom land. The second reason he’s smart is by making no noises when he was in the box. (Artifact, October 17, 2013)

Subin thought that Henry was determined because “he went to the city by getting mailed. He hurt himself so he didn’t have to go to work” (Artifact, October 17, 2013). Garret wrote that Henry was:

Courageous because he lied to his master, and you were not allowed to
lie to your master. I also think he is courageous because he shipped himself off in a box to go the freedom land so he didn’t’ have to be a slave anymore. (Artifact, October 17, 2013)

Not only had responses grown to be more varied, they were also supported in a manner that represented the participants’ thinking and understanding of the two books that we had read.

Sophisticated words were used naturally in participants’ conversations as was evidenced in an interview with Monique. After reviewing the three units of study that we had participated in so far, I asked Monique which unit she liked the best:

M: This one [Civil Rights].
R: Why?
M: Because I like history, and I like . . . it is more interesting how you can learn how things were before we were born and how it was when we were segregated and separated from each other.
R: So, when we learned about immigration that was history, too.
M: Yes, when they came across the ocean to see how things could be better for them and how their life would be better if they came to America.
R: But you like this one better?
M: I like this one better because it shows how people accomplished their dreams even though people were doubting them, they still did it.
R: What do you think about that?
M: I think that they were courageous and independent. (Interview,
November 24, 2013)

The words courageous and independent were words incorporated into the authentic literature read during the second unit of study on Hallmark People. Now, Monique used these words naturally to discuss the many people she had studied during the Civil Rights unit of study showing sophisticated vocabulary as well as intertextual thinking and connections. She also used these words naturally as she talked about these people as if she really knew them.

Throughout the study, the participants also began to use content-specific vocabulary naturally in their responses. When writing about immigration, Monique wrote that immigration meant “people from different counties come to America for freedom and religion options and to experience America and see new things to become a citizen” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). The word citizen was not addressed explicitly in instruction, but was certainly applicable to the first unit of study on immigration. Monique included this word in her response on her own. When I asked Monique why she used this word, she talked about her personal knowledge. She talked about how she knew that some individuals do not have a Green Card or citizenship and have to gain citizenship to stay in America.

Similar use of content-specific vocabulary was found in the third unit of study. While learning about the Civil Rights Movement, Subin wrote that the big idea about the black athletes was “that white people didn’t like the black people because the white people is prejudiced” (Artifact, November 15, 2013). Again, the word “prejudiced” was not used during instruction. However, Subin drew the conclusion based on how the black
athletes were treated in the various texts that had been read that white people didn’t like white people, and they were prejudiced. Similarly, Monique also used the word segregate in the Civil Rights unit (Artifact, November 15, 2013). The word segregate was evident in some of the books read during the Civil Rights unit. However, she used this word naturally while talking about the black athletes and how the white people tried to segregate them.

Words such as prejudiced and segregate are content-specific words which naturally fit when studying about the Civil Rights Movement. However, different than traditional instruction, the participants of this study were not ever given a vocabulary list with words that would be used while studying the Civil Rights Movement. These students used these words naturally in their responses to make and strengthen the points they were trying to make.

An increased vocabulary is desired to be literate. Making inferences and drawing conclusions are also desired literate behaviors that should occur naturally but are often difficult for students.

**Making Inferences and Drawing Conclusions**

At the beginning of the study, I conducted a mini-lesson on how to make inferences. Next, the participants were to write what the word immigration meant to them and what questions they had about immigration. I read two books focusing on the journey immigrants often make when immigrating to the United States, *Grandfather’s Journey* (Say, 2008) and *Ziba Came on a Boat* (Lofthouse, 2007). *Grandfather’s Journey* tells the story of Allen Say’s grandfather who left his home in Japan to explore
the world. The story tells the tale of his love for two countries and his desire to be in both places. *Ziba Came on a Boat* is also based off of real events and tells the story of a young girl who travels to America with her mother thinking of all that she left behind and hoping for a new and better life in America.

After reading these two books, the participants were invited to revisit and write what immigration meant to them now, what inferences they made while listening to the books, and what new questions they had about immigration. Only two out of twenty-two (9%) participants attempted to make an inference after listening to this first pair of books which focused on the journey that those who immigrate to the United States might make. Only one of the two was reasonable. Talia wrote, “The two characters were wanting to go home” (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013).

After learning in the first unit of study about immigration through intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, the participants were again asked to make inferences. Seven out of twenty participants (35%) made inferences that were not reasonable or did not write an inference at all. Thirteen of the twenty participants (65%) made inferences that were reasonable. Of these thirteen, six (30%) were substantial (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). As defined previously, a substantial response is being defined as a response showing true knowing or deep learning. An example of a response that was considered substantial was written by Garrett. He wrote, “People don’t just move because they want to. They move to have a better life. People sometimes move because they are poor” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). Talia also wrote a response that was considered substantial. She wrote “I inferred in most books I
read about immigration is that they all felt homesick, or they missed something from their home country” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). Both of these participants responded with a reasonable inference that reached beyond the superficial level by either including some type of feelings in their response or multiple details with their inference.

As the participants continued learning in an intertextual way with authentic literature and meaningful writing, their ability to make substantial inferences improved. Whereas it took much convincing to have participants make inferences at the beginning of the study, the participants began making inferences naturally as they continued through the study. This was noted after reading Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Maker’s Strike of 1909 and Who Says Women Can’t be Doctors?: The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell.

I was shocked at how naturally students made inferences! We started with the cover. Students naturally made inferences pertaining to women and them not being able to be doctors during this time period, and that the book took place in the past. Then, they began making inferences to the type of character traits Elizabeth Blackwell possessed. Demetryus was excited about making inferences. He made inferences that were solid and supported his inferences with facts from the story. He was even able to make inferences when not prompted. (Field Notes, October 9, 2013).

Making inferences naturally continued. For example, after reading The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind in the Hallmark People unit, Camila wrote:

I think I want to remember that he was creative because he made a
windmill to get more food because they are poor. What I think is that he is creative. What surprised me is the only food came out of the ground without any problems with the weather or many changes in the price of seeds they can make service of the problem. A connection I can make is he cannot speak English, but in the story, they don’t say that.

(Artifact, October 21, 2013)

Camila is an English language learner and while her response was not necessarily fluent, she made many inferences throughout. She inferred that William was creative by creating the windmill and that it was surprising that the food came out of the ground without any problems. The connection she made was actually an inference, as it does not say if William spoke English. However, Camila was using her background knowledge, coupled with what she learned about William living in Malaysia to make the inference of him not being able to speak English. Camila shared how she knew that sometimes when people live in other countries they cannot speak English, but in some countries they teach you. I asked Camila how she knew this. She said, “Where I come from in Puerto Rico, they teach you English every day, and you have to pass.” This knowledge aided Camila infer about William and his ability to speak English.

During the intertextual analysis for the second unit of study on Hallmark People, the participants were able to make inferences and draw conclusions that were both interesting and substantial. For example, Garrett wrote the following about the person he studied, William Carlos Williams, and the person Kayla studied, Louisa May Alcott. He wrote, “They are both doctors and writers. William Carlos Williams and Louisa May
Alcott both worked hard. Louisa May Alcott died around the time when William Carlos Williams was born” (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013). While Louisa May Alcott was actually a nurse, close reading, sharing, and drawing conclusions were needed for Garrett to determine that one was born around the same time that the other died.

Garrett and Kayla were not alone in being able to make inferences and draw conclusions while utilizing specific information. Angel learned about Georgia O’Keefe and made connections to Walter Anderson. She wrote, “They both paint stuff that they see around them. They both explore nature. They both like to collect items off of the ground. They both traveled on a boat. They both lived in America. They both lived on an island for a while. They both had a big accomplishment. They both lived about fifty plus years” (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013).

This didn’t mean that the participants didn’t ever take a step back. It appeared that at the beginning of each unit of study, the participants did not make many inferences, even after reading a text related to the unit topic. For example, at the beginning of the third unit of study which centered on the Civil Rights Movement, the participants read *Ruth and the Green Book*. After reading this singular text, the participants were to write what the words Civil Rights meant to them, what inferences they could make, and what questions they had. Thirteen out of twenty-two participants (59%) either left this section blank on their questionnaire, answered in a manner that was factual rather than an inference, or made an inference that was not reasonable or that was disconnected from what was read. For example, Diego wrote that they didn’t let them in the gas station
During the third unit of study, focusing on the Civil Rights Movement, the participants read various intertextually connected texts that were explicitly paired in a variety of ways while also participating in meaningful writing. After the participants experienced this authentic literature focusing on the Civil Rights Movement and connected in this deliberate way, their ability to make inferences increased. Only two of the nineteen (11%) participants either responded with an inference that was not reasonable or left this section blank. Six of the nineteen (32%) provided an inference that was reasonable but was at the surface level, while the majority of the participants, eleven out of nineteen (58%) provided inferences that were not only reasonable but were also deep and substantial. For example Monique wrote, “Even though slavery was over, they were still treated as if they were slaves” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013) and Kayla wrote, “I thought Ruby, Rosa, and Brewster were courageous because they did what they had to in order to have what we have. Like how Ruby helped us go to school with everyone else” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Both Monique and Kayla made inferences that stretched beyond what had been learned about the Civil Rights Movement. Monique connected the treatment of slavery, a topic she had learned about previously in her school career, while Kayla connected what she had learned about historical figures such as Ruby Bridges and Rosa Parks as well as Brewster from the picture book *Busing Brewster*. She made the inference of how what Ruby Bridges did
helped make schools desegregated as they are today. Combing these figures to make these inferences also demonstrated intertextual thinking.

Throughout the study, it was found that inferences were difficult to extract at the beginning of each unit of study. Even though difficult at the beginning of each unit of study, the level of difficulty became less and less as the study progressed. The participants began to make inferences on their own, without prompting. As shown by Kayla’s response, they also began to make inferences that directly connected to their life today. Therefore, they began to make inferences that were relevant to them. Their inferences were being made as a literate behavior, rather than in response to what was being taught or in response to practicing a skill. The participants also began to naturally use symbolism in their responses and their thinking.

**Using Symbolism**

Symbolism can be a difficult concept to teach and a difficult concept to learn. However, as the participants experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, they began to use symbolism naturally in representing their thinking. Camila shared how she and her partner used symbolism while creating their Civil Rights Movement poster. She shared that creating the poster was one of her favorite activities:

C: I liked that most, the poster, too. Because when I do that, my partner and me picked that book because we think about baseball, and we think about they’re being treated. Their being bullied or they’re being treated good. And my partner and me thought to pick those books, and we draw a picture, and we draw clouds. They mean freedom.
R: Oh! The clouds stood for freedom?

C: The clouds were for freedom. The purple was for freedom, and the blue was for you can do anything that you want.

R: Oh! I didn’t know that. Thank you for telling me that. So the blue stood for being able to do anything that you want.

C: Yes, and the purple was for being free like in *Freedom Song*. He wanted to get his child’s back.

R: Tell me that again.

C: In *Freedom Song*, he wants to get his child’s back and his wife. He wants to get his child and his wife, I think. (Interview, November 24, 2013)

Students were not asked to use symbolism while creating their poster. They were given guidelines stating that they should include a picture as part of their poster. However, Camila and her partner’s thinking stretched beyond the guidelines. Not only did they include a picture, but they did so symbolically. She articulated their thinking in a manner that made sense and directly tied to the time period we had just studied. I asked Camila how she and her partner decided to use symbolism. She shared that her and her partner wanted to tell others what it meant about freedom because that was what was most important. She shared that they felt the symbolism they used helped share this message.

Camila and her partner were not the only ones who used symbolism in their thinking. Monique shared her use of symbolism in her thinking during an interview. I asked Monique what pair of books was the easiest for her to make connections in
between or to draw conclusions or make inferences. She referred to the two books about Rosa Parks, *Back of the Bus* and *Rosa*:

M: I think that it was . . . I think it was . . . this one right here [Rosa Parks] because some people already know about Rosa Parks, like I do. You know?

R: Yes.

M: I think that it was easy because we know that Rosa Parks sat in the front of the bus, and she was also, she was like an octopus really. She had a secret association about how they were going to change to have the rights like everyone else and where she can sit wherever you feel like sitting. She was a seamstress, as well.

R: What did you say she was at the beginning?

M: She was an octopus?

R: An octopus?

M: Yes.

R: I thought that was what you said.

M: Yes, because she was a seamstress, she had an association, she had a husband, she had a mama that she had to take care of, and she was a hard working woman. She didn’t want to walk all the way in the back. She was a well dressed woman. She didn’t want to walk all the way in the back with her high heels on when she worked all day.

While Monique’s use of symbolism surprised me, she was able to articulate her choice of comparing Rosa Parks to an octopus because of the many roles she played and how she
balanced all of these roles. She used the metaphor of an octopus to make her thinking visible to me during this interview, to “symbolize” how she had to balance all of these different aspects of her life.

Just as with making inferences and drawing conclusions, using symbolism came naturally to participants. As readers, we often use symbolism as a literate behavior to represent our thinking and our learning. We also use symbolism to stretch our learning and our understanding of what we are learning about. These two participants demonstrated this in their creations and also in what they shared. Their actions showed that their literate behaviors had evolved. Not only had the participants’ behaviors indicated an evolution of literate behaviors, the results also indicated that real literature transforms students into being real readers.

**Real Literature Transforms Students to Being Real Readers**

As the participants experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, they developed several literate behaviors that represented characteristics of a real reader. There are many habits real readers employ in their everyday reading life. They do so naturally and without prompting. Real readers read and ask questions about their reading. Their reading also leads them to wanting to learn more and to extend their thinking. Real readers read closely, for detail and reread for additional information (Beers & Probst, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2014). Real readers value books and find authors and illustrators that they particularly enjoy and seek out books written and illustrated by these people. Many of these “real reader” characteristics were
evidenced by the participants throughout the study. These are presented as three subthemes: questioning, reading closely, reading for detail, and value of books.

**Questioning**

Throughout the study, participants were often asked what questions or wonderings they had about what they were learning. Questions can be differentiated between clarifying content area questions and larger global questions (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000/2007). Initially, when the participants were asked to write questions, they either said that they didn’t have any, wrote statements rather than questions, or wrote questions that were surface level or clarifying content area questions. It also appeared that their questions were written simply because they were told to write questions.

The first time the participants were asked to write questions they had was at the beginning of the first unit of study on Immigration. They were to write initial questions they had about immigration and then questions they had after reading the first pair of books. For the first response, thirteen out of twenty-two (59%) of the participants wrote that they did not have any questions or they wrote “I don’t know (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013) prior to reading the two texts. Other participants wrote statements rather than questions. For example, Hassan wrote “I think about family” (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013).

There were a few of the participants who wrote questions showing a curiosity for learning, like Monique whose question was “How do people come from different countries that don’t have airports and cars? (Questionnaire, September 3, 2013). Other questions showing a natural curiosity but were simplistic, such as “why do people move
to different countries?” (Garrett, Questionnaire, September 3, 2013), “why do they come to America?” (Angel, Questionnaire, September 3, 2013), “what does immigration mean?” (Diego, Kayla, & Matida, Questionnaire, September 3, 2013) were much more representative of the responses gathered.

After the participants experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing in the first unit of study, they were to ask what questions they now had about immigration. At this point, the participants responded with more questions as well as questions written at higher levels. The questions the participants began to ask began to be large, global questions that stretched beyond literal, low level questions. However, many of these questions were unfocused, not necessarily text based, and still did not represent a natural curiosity or a question that could really be answered. Jayden wrote, “How many countries are there that people immigrate from?” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). Other questions were questions the participants really should have known the answer to such as Garrett who wrote, “Why do people move from one country to another? What’s it like in their old country? Did they have a good life? Did they have enough food?” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). Similarly, Angel wrote, “Why do they have to be forced to immigrate? Why do they immigrate? Do they always have to immigrate?” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). However, there were exceptions. An example was Dymetrus who wrote, “Why America? Why not go to another country? How is life when you come to America?” (Questionnaire, September 30, 2013). Although Dymetrus would not be able to read to find out all of his answers by conducting additional research, he could certainly read to find out some of them. Also, his
questioning showed a natural curiosity to learn more. However, Dymetrus was an exception, as previously indicated. Most of the participants wrote questions that did not necessarily lend to reading additional texts. These questions were generated when the texts were intertextually connected primarily as complementary texts.

As the participants learned with texts being paired in various ways, their questioning grew to showing a natural curiosity for learn more. In addition, the questions they posed could be answered by researching additional texts. For example, the participants read *Henry’s Freedom Box* and *Freedom Song: The Story of Henry “Box” Brown*, two books written to tell the story of Henry “Box” Brown, a slave who mailed himself to freedom. These books are paired as conflicting texts as there are several differences in the texts. For example in *Henry’s Freedom Box*, Henry pours vitriol on his finger and burns his flesh to the bone so that he will be able to stay home from work. In a conflicting manner, in *Freedom Song*, he intentionally chops his finger right down to the bone rather than the tobacco leaf that he was supposed to be chopping. These differences motivated the participants to ask questions which showed a natural curiosity to learn more and to find out the truth. When writing a quick write, Jayden posed several questions, “I wonder what really happened: did he cut or burn his finger? When was his real birthday? Where did his master live? Did he have any friends at the tobacco factory?” (Artifact, October 11, 2013). Jayden’s questions were mixed. Some questions could be answered by conducting additional research while others could not. He could find out if Henry really cut or burned his finger and where his master lived. He may or may not be able to discover if Henry had any friends at the tobacco factory. However,
this question was certainly a question posed out of natural curiosity. As fifth graders, friends are important. Jayden was taking this importance and using it in creating one of his questions about Henry.

Jayden was not the only one who questioned Henry’s actions. Talia questioned Henry’s actions in connection to what she had previously learned about the escape of slaves. She wrote, “I wonder why Henry chose to get shipped in a box instead of running to hide in the woods or live in the woods” (Artifact, October 11, 2013). Talia’s questions were natural and based off of what she had learned previously in school. How slaves escaped was not part of our instruction. Therefore, we did not talk about how slaves sometimes escaped by running into the woods. Talia connected to this background knowledge on her own while formulating her question out of natural curiosity.

Other participants also had natural, curious questions about Henry “Box” Brown. They wondered about his actions, his feelings, the authors’ choices in writing the books, and what happened after the stories concluded. Dymetrus questioned Henry’s actions by connecting to what he already knew. He wrote:

I wonder how he did not die when he was upside down. His blood went into his head right you die in ten minutes if blood comes in your head, but he survived, and I wonder how he did that. I wonder how he did not starve to death. I starve to death like in today. That guy must have ate like a load and had a tummy ache really but then how does he his pee and poop. (Artifact, October 11, 2013).
Dymetrus was connecting what he read in the two books to his personal life and his feelings. Within his connection was the feeling of hunger and the connection of how that feels.

Kayla questioned the authors of the books, a practice that real readers often do. She asked, “Why did the two authors say different ways that Henry got hurt?” (Artifact, October 11, 2013). Although it might not be possible to find out the motive for the two authors using varying reasons in their story lines, it does bring about the curiosity of how authors conduct their research and determine their story lines.

Real readers also wonder what happens after the story concludes. Jasmine shared her thinking, “I was wondering if Henry ever saw his family again” (Artifact, October 11, 2013). Many of the questions posed inspired the participants to want to extend their learning in a self-motivated manner. It inspired them to do their own research to find out the answers to their questions.

Their questions began to show an extension of their thinking as they applied what they were learning in the unit of study to their world around them. An example was found in Talia’s questions written after learning about the Civil Rights Movement. She asked, “Why did the laws change when people marched? When did the laws change? How are some of the countries segregated and some unsegregated?” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Hiba’s questions also stretched to the world around her and were written following the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement. She asked, “Why do people do wars to get what they want? Why won’t they just say please for them?” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Hiba’s response was significant because as
someone who had immigrated to the United States herself from a country in turmoil, she was familiar with war.

In the same questionnaire, Monique recognized that while there is not segregation anymore, it does not mean that there is universal peace and harmony. She wrote, “My question is if we are really equal then why do we have rednecks that have hatred toward blacks” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Again, as an African American girl herself, she was discussing how even though we do not have separate restrooms and drinking fountains, we do have people who treat others differently.

Although Kayla did not provide specific evidence for how she knew that there were other types of segregation and unfair treatment, she questioned why we only learned about segregation centering on the Civil Rights Movement. She wrote, “What are more things about the Civil Rights? Why did we only read about black segregation?” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Her question made me think that she knew that there were other kinds of segregation, other ways that people were not always treated fairly.

The participants’ questions were also aesthetic in nature. Students questioned the motive of white people during the time of the Civil Rights. Subin wrote, “The question I have is why did the white people hate the black people?” (Questionnaire, November 22, 2013). Subin, as with several others, brought the feelings that accompanied segregation and the way that the black people were being treated into her question.

As the participants continued throughout the study, the levels of their questions deepened and were also asked in a more natural manner. In addition, the participants’
questions seemed to be more meaningful and asked in a manner that would push their thinking forward. This was a contrast to asking questions just because that was what they were supposed to do. This natural literate behavior found in real readers was not the only natural behavior observed. Students also naturally began to read closely and read for detail.

**Reading Closely, Reading for Detail**

Just as with questioning, the participants began to read closely and for detail in a natural manner. This is what real readers do. Real readers read closely, for detail and reread for additional information (Beers & Probst, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2014). When they are not sure what they have read or have not gained enough information from their reading, they go back and reread. As the participants experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, their responses became more specific and text dependent, showing that they had indeed read closely and for detail.

An example of reading closely and reading for detail was represented in a response written by Dymetrus when the participants were asked to share two similarities, one difference, and one conclusion from *Back of the Bus* and *Rosa*. His response was specific as he talked about her actions to include where Rosa sat on the bus and as well as her physical characteristics. “In both books Rosa Parks got arrested and in both books it said she had a strong chin. Rosa was in the front in the other book she was in the middle. She was brave for not moving” (Artifact, November 11, 2013). It did talk about Rosa Parks having a strong chin in both of the books; this was important because it depicted Rosa as being brave and strong. However, there was not a lot of emphasis put on this by
either author. Dymetrus brought attention to this with his writing, demonstrating close reading.

The participants voiced an understanding of being an active reader and rereading to gain additional information in the texts read. This showed the practice of reading closely and for detail. Luis shared that he thought composing the biographical poem was the easiest out of the experiences in the unit on Hallmark People. He shared that reading the book himself and rereading helped him learn. Not only did he learn more, but he also enjoyed having this opportunity:

R: Why was the poem the easiest for you?

L: We read the book ourselves, and we got to know a lot about the book because we got to look at it a lot.

R: Oh, because you got to go back and look at it, you learned more?

L: Yes.

R: Did you enjoy doing that?

L: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

Kayla also shared that she also enjoyed this project and for many of the same reasons. She shared that she like to read on her own and talked about how she could really make connections to her book and to her life.

R: Now let’s think about the projects we have done so far. What was your favorite? Which did you like the most?

K: I liked the one that we had to do all of the steps to get to publish.

R: The biographical poem project?
K: Yes.

R: Why did you like that?

K: I liked reading by myself. So I got that book, and I was very happy because that book connected to me. My mom was a nurse, and I like to write stories.

(Interview, November 10, 2013)

The participants were reading closely and rereading on their own when they needed to. For example, Fabian was reading and researching to create his Share Fair poster on the Civil Rights Movement. While reading he said, “Mrs. C. that doesn’t make sense,’ but then, before I could say anything, he reread on his own” (Field Notes, November 19, 2013).

The participants began to see value in rereading and how doing so built their independence. They began to employ this skill rather than to simply ask for help as they had done so frequently in the past. An example of this was also evidenced as two of the participants worked on their Share Fair poster during the third unit of study focusing on the Civil Rights Movement. As I was walking around the room, Angel raised her hand and told me that she and her partner needed help. Her partner quickly interjected and said, “No we don’t, see” while pointing to the place in the text that would guide them in moving forward. These students continued on their own by rereading closely to move forward in the progress on their project (Field Notes, November 19, 2013).

The participants’ responses showed that they valued reading closely and reading for detail. Not only did they value it, they embraced it. During the biographical poem project during the Hallmark People unit, the participants were excited to have the book
that they chose, and they were grateful for being able to employ close reading and reading for detail behaviors as they read and reread their texts so that they could gain a deeper understanding of the person they were researching. Even when not reading a book themselves, they were able to read closely and write about details that were important such as Rosa Parks having a strong chin and how this showed her determination and her bravery. They were able to use various aspects of the book to further their learning. The books became important as did their ability to read them closely and for detail. While reading closely and for detail, the participants began to value books for what they have to offer.

**Value of Books**

While other forms of authentic literature were utilized in the study, the participants learned primarily through intertextually connected picture books. There was only one occasion where a singular text was read. For the remaining learning experiences, at least two texts were read. The participants discussed how this authentic literature influenced their learning, their thinking, and their appreciation for literature or value of books.

The participants noticed they enjoyed books because they helped them experience what was being studied and helped make their learning real to them. They specifically referred to how they valued the pictures in the books and how these pictures aided in their understanding and enhanced the way they thought. They often did so while referring to a pair of texts or a text set. As of one of the participants shared, rather than teaching them about immigration, the picture books helped “show” them what it was like to immigrate.
He also liked seeing the “ships and oceans and the Statue of Liberty” (Interview, September 30, 2013) while learning about immigration.

Real readers value books, both for enjoyment and for a tool for learning. The participants shared an appreciation from reading picture books as one of their texts and shared how they felt they were a valuable learning tool. During an interview, Talia shared how picture books were really for everyone, first grade and all the way up to college. She gave the reason of them showing how people feel and how they show that you can connect with them (Interview, September 30, 2013). Talia was making reference to the pictures and how the pictures work symbiotically to tell a story.

Talia was not the only one who discussed how the illustrations in a book aided in helping the reader bring meaning to the story. Kayla shared, “In picture books, you can tell so much from looking at the pictures. You can tell more than if you were just reading the story (Interview, September, 30, 2013). Kayla was responding to how the pictures brought additional meaning to what they were reading about.

Real readers value authors and they value illustrators. During the study, the participants were exposed to many intertextually connected pieces of authentic literature, many in picture book format. Their value for authors and illustrators was witnessed on several occasions. During the unit on the Civil Rights Movement, four books were intertextually connected as controlling texts on black athletes. The participants were excited to break into small groups to learn about a specific black athlete. One the participants said excitedly, “Look, Floyd Cooper!!!!” (Field Notes, November 14, 2013). They had noticed that the book Queen of the Track: Alice Coachman, Olympic High-
Jump Champion was illustrated by Floyd Cooper. He had also illustrated Ruth and the Green Book and Back of the Bus which the participants had read previously in the unit. This participant naturally recognized the connection and showed her excitement in her exclamation.

Real readers also value books themselves. This evolved throughout the study. To conclude the second unit of study, the participants participated in a Browse and Pass activity where they spent a little bit of time with a book “browsing” through it before they were prompted to pass it to the person next to them. The participants had to be reminded repeatedly through this process at what behavior was expected of them:

Some students were eager for a particular book, even if someone else had it. Some were not patient at all. They had to be reminded that they would be able to look at all of the books so grabbing them from the center of the tables was not appropriate. However, this is what they tried to do.

(Field Notes, October 23, 2013)

The participants’ behavior and mannerisms did not show that they had a value of books during this initial experience. They did not handle the books carefully or with respect. I continued to write in my field notes:

I had to provide constant guidance for them. Some students would look at the book and say, “this is the book I want” and then think they should be done. They were reminded that they needed to continue browsing just to make sure they could choose three books. (Field Notes, October 23, 2013)
Not only were the participants not handling the books with respect, they did not show an interest in browsing the books past choosing the book they wanted to focus on. There was also evidence of not demonstrating behaviors that indicated they had a value for books. Throughout the unit, Mrs. Neff and I continued to remind students of how to handle the books and what respectful behavior was expected of them.

Their respect for the books evolved greatly throughout the study. The next time the participants were engaged in another Browse and Pass activity was after learning about the Civil Rights Movement. However, this time their behavior was drastically different from the first time they participated in this type of experience:

Even though I had given specific directions on how to browse and had also shared my expectations, I was impressed by the level of respect that the students used when handling these books this time. They didn’t rush through them, they turned the pages in a way that would ensure they did not rip. They were calm and engaged in browsing through the books with the purpose of seeing if this was a book they would want to read. Even if they appeared interested, they continue to browse through the other books to see what others they liked. This is a behavior of real readers. This is also a drastic change from the last unit when students used the picture books in their research. (Field Notes, November 18, 2013)

Throughout the study, the participants began to evolve as real readers who employ real reading behaviors. They showed a true value and respect for the books they were reading. As noted, this was evidenced in both their reading behavior as well as in
their conversation and their actions. Another trait of real readers is making intertextual connections and thinking intertextually. Thinking intertextually also developed throughout the study as students experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing.

Development of Intertextual Thinking

As the participants learned throughout the study, their intertextual thinking developed and grew. Much information evolved pertaining to this development of intertextual thinking. First, the participants demonstrated that some connections are easier to make than others. This may be because of the books themselves, because of the way they are paired, or because of the tasks that are accompanied by the books. In addition, once individuals begin to think intertextually, they continue to do so and apply this type of thinking in varied experiences, even without prompting. This intertextual thinking becomes a way of thinking. This type of thinking becomes a natural part of their thinking process. Two subthemes are presented for the development of intertextual thinking: varying difficulty in making intertextual connections and intertextual connections: a way of thinking.

Varying Difficulty in Making Intertextual Connections

The participants made intertextual connections using authentic literature and meaningful writing in each of the four units of study. Some of these intertextual connections were easier for the participants to make than others. However, it was found that this varied by individual student, by the tasks that were connected to, the literature being read, as well as to the actual literature that was read.
For example, Luis discussed that *Brave Girl* and *Who Said Women Can’t be Doctors?* were easy books to make connections between. In this pair of books, the participants were to choose one word that would describe both Clara Lemlich and Elizabeth Blackwell and give two reasons citing why this word was a good choice. It appeared that being successful at this task lent to Luis’s feeling about these two books. These two books were paired in a complementary way, meaning they were connected by theme. He shared that the reason he felt these books were easy was because they were similar people. He said, “It was easiest because they were both brave. People told them that they couldn’t do it, but they did it” (Interview, November 10, 2013). This response was reasonable because as Luis indicated, both women faced adversity and both persevered to rise above what others thought of them. While Luis talked about the two ladies being brave during my interview with him, he actually wrote about the women both being intelligent when he participated in the “One Word” activity (Artifact, October 9, 2013). Even though he gave two different words to describe these ladies on two separate occasions, both words were appropriate. Luis concluded that making connections between these two texts, paired in a complementary way, was easy because the women were so much like each other.

Kayla also felt these same two books were the easiest to make connections in between; however, she felt this way because she thought the task she had to complete related to these books was an easy one to accomplish and also felt the books were connected in a way that was easy to deconstruct:

R: Why were those easier?
K: Because it kind of showed us more about them than most books would say.

Like I remember in Elizabeth Blackwell how she said that the boys didn’t connect with her but then when they got to know her, they did. It was a little bit more information than what the other books say.

R: So, you thought these books were more informative?

K: Yes.

R: Did you have an easy time coming up with a word to describe both of these people?

K: Yes.

R: Why did you think that was easy?

K: Because they both . . . I can’t put it into words. . . they both had a sense of spirit. They were proud of themselves. She was proud that she was getting what she deserved [Clara], and she was proud of being a doctor.

(Interview, November 10, 2013)

Hassan also shared that this particular pair of text was easiest for him. When asked why, he responded in a manner that directly related to the task. He responded with the following:

H: Because it was easy to tell why she was brave, and it was easy to tell that she went to college, and she really wanted to become a doctor.

R: How do you think that connected? Was it easy to make a connection between these two ladies?

H: Yes. Because they were both brave, and they did everything they could do to
be a doctor and to be a brave girl. They both were girls, and they tried hard.

R: So you thought these two women were similar, and it was pretty easy to make connections between the two?

H: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

Again, like with Luis and Kayla, Hassan felt that this pair of books was easy to make connections between. They were not about the same person. Rather they were a complementary pair of text, meaning they were connected by a central topic. However, it cannot be concluded that complementary texts are the easiest to make connections between.

In the first unit of study, it was the complementary paired texts of The Matchbox Diary and Small Beauties that were the most difficult for participants. Perhaps it was the pairing of these two books along with the task they needed to complete. For these two books, the participants had to tell what they thought the big idea was. So there is a potential that it could have been either of these factors that lent to the participants not being as successful with these two books as I had hoped. Kayla talked about how a lot was going on in these two books which made it difficult for her to determine what the main idea was. However, she did not talk about this until my second interview with her which occurred after the second unit of study on Hallmark People. I asked Kayla why she felt that this was difficult for her:

K: Because there were a bunch of things that happened with her, and I couldn’t just pick one. She did so many things in the book. She goes bankrupt, then her house burns down, then she moves to America. It was crazy.
R: Do you remember what you said the big idea was between the two books?

K: I do not.

R: I have it here. You said, they each collected something. So you did say the big idea. Do you remember why they each collected something?

K: I remember in *The Matchbox Diary*, they collected stuff because he didn’t know how to write. In *Small Beauties*, they collected things from the ashes of her house so they could remember. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

While Kayla remembered how difficult it was for her to conclude what the main idea of these two books were, she still remembered it, as well as the reasons to support her answer. The conclusion she made about the main idea was reasonable as were her supporting reasons. Kayla was not the only one who talked about these two particular books during an interview, over a month after reading them.

Mia also talked about *The Matchbox Diary* and *Small Beauties* when I asked her if there were any pairs of texts that were particularly difficult for her in the Hallmark People unit:

M: *Small Beauties* and *The Matchbox Diary* were hard. They both had different meanings. They both collected things.

R: That is not what you wrote about. What helped you understand this?

M: Every time you read it, and I thought about it. It may have helped that we have been making connections. Now I get it.

(Interview, November 10, 2013)
When Mia had written what the main idea was in her foldable during the first unit, she wrote, “This is the picture I drew. It made me think about when they were on a boat” (Artifact, September 9, 2013). Her two responses demonstrate not only that some texts are more difficult than others to connect but also that sometimes it takes time and practice to develop this kind of thinking. It does not happen in one isolated strategy experience. While Mia’s initial response was true to the events in the books, it was superficial and not the main idea or “big idea” of the two stories. However, after having time for these two stories to percolate and simmer, she was able to tell that the two books were connected because they both collected things to remember the countries they left when they immigrated to the United States.

It would seem that synoptically paired texts might be the easiest for students to make connections between and to understand. Since synoptically connected texts are written as a variation of a single story, one book can build on the other and can help strengthen students’ understanding of the topic. However, this was not always the case.

In the first unit of study, the participants read two books about Emma Lazarus, *Emma’s Poem* (Glaser, 2010) and *Liberty’s Voice* (Silverman, 2011). While these two books were both about Emma Lazarus, they differed greatly in their style. The first book that was read to the participants, *Emma’s Poem*, focused on the famous sonnet written by Emma Lazarus in 1883, “The New Colossus.” Her famous words were engraved on a bronze plaque and mounted inside the lower level of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in 1903. They greeted travelers as when they arrived in the United States. These words stand as the foundation for the book, *Emma’s Poem*, as well.
Give me your tired, your poor, Your Huddled masses yearning to
breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send
these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the
golden door!

Emma’s poem illustrated her actions in helping numerous immigrants who were
making a long and difficult journey to the United States. This is the center and the
foundation of this book, which was read first to the participants because it connected best
with the unit on immigration in its entirety. It also laid a solid foundation for the second
book.

The second book read orally to students was Liberty’s Voice. This book tells
Emma Lazarus’s life story beginning many years before she became so well known for
her poem and for the work she did to support immigrants in their long journey. Since the
book provides such a complete picture of Emma Lazarus, it takes quite a bit of time to
actually come to the portions of the text that connects with the first book. Perhaps, this
lent to the participants’ difficulty with this pair or perhaps it was that the style of the two
books were drastically different.

During an interview, Angel shared that she had a difficult time connecting these
books because they didn’t “sound like they were the same. It was hard to tell that they
connected” (Interview, November 10, 2013). As state previously, Liberty’s Voice was
quite text heavy for a picture book and told the story of Emma’s entire life. The writer’s
style was much different than in Emma’s Poem.
Talia also shared that she had a difficult time with these two texts when I talked with her during an interview. While she shared that she had a difficult time with *Emma’s Poem* and *Liberty’s Voice*, she did not have the same difficulty as others did in formulating the “big idea” for *Small Beauties* and *The Matchbox Diary*. This reaffirmed the thought that the level of difficulty of intertextually connected texts does not always lie in the way texts are paired, nor does it lie solely in the actual texts that are paired, sometimes it varies from student to student:

R: During our immigration unit, were there a pair of texts that was hard for you to understand or to come up with the big idea?

T: *Emma’s Poem*.

R: Why was that hard?

T: I couldn’t think about what the connections were . . . what she connected to. . .

R: They were about the same person. Was it the way they were written that made it difficult for you?

T: Yes.

R: What about these two books? [points to *Small Beauties* and *The Matchbox Diary*]

T: Those were easy.

R: I am pretty sure your connection was accurate. You didn’t think those texts were difficult?

T: No. (Interview, September 30, 2013)
In checking Talia’s response after reading *Small Beauties* and *The Matchbox Diary*, my thought was confirmed. She was able to make a reasonable conclusion of what the big idea was. This shows that while some texts are difficult for some students, they may be easier for others.

Another example of the participants having a difficult time with synoptically connected texts occurred in the very next unit of study. For this unit based on Hallmark People, the participants were given three opportunities to read texts that were paired synoptically, or by topic. The participants read *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (Kamkwamba, 2012) and then a piece of informational text about William Kamkwamba from the back of the book. In addition, they read two books about Henry “Box” Brown, and also two texts paired synoptically about the Hallmark Person of their choice.

After reading *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, the participants read an informational piece about William Kamkwamba. As previously stated, this informational piece was copied for the students so they could interact with it during the reading.

Mia was one of the students who shared that she had a difficult time with these two texts:

R: Which pair of books were the hardest?

M: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* because there were a lot of interesting things, and I had a lot of decisions to make. (Interview, November 10, 2013) Mia talked with me about having a difficult time deciding what to include for the three responses the participants were invited to write in their Step Books: something that surprised them, something they could connect to, and something they wanted to
remember. Mia shared that her decision making was made more difficult by reading the additional piece of text because there were so many interesting things that she learned about William Kamkwamba, and this added more interesting facts. She shared that she had a difficult time choosing.

The participants read synoptically connected texts while they were researching and composing their biographical poem. They read a picture book on their Hallmark Person and then a piece of informational text. Mia created her biographical poem project based on Moina Bell Michael who was otherwise known as the *Poppy Lady*. I wondered if Mia experienced the same type of difficulty with these two texts.

R: What about for your poem?

M: I found it helpful to read both texts for the poem because if you read the book, and you thought you learned and then you could read the other piece and learn more. It didn’t make it harder to make decisions. It was a good book, too.

R: So what do you think is the difference?

M: In *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, I was confused. It was too much. There were a lot of interesting things, and I had to pick one. In the *Poppy Lady*, it was only a few interesting things you learned about.

(Interview, November 10, 2013)

Talia also shared that she found *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* difficult. She shared her reasons for this difficulty during an interview:

R: Why was that the hardest?

T: Well, first we learned about that and then we learned about his real life. They
weren’t really the same books. They weren’t really the same.

R: They were the about same person, but they weren’t the exact same books.

That was hard for you?

T: Yes.

R: Why?

T: I don’t know. The way he talked about his feelings. They weren’t like they were in real life on the paper. They didn’t even talk about him going to study in college.

R: So, when you are talking about real life, what part of the book are you talking about?

T: That one (pointing to the informational text that had been copied for students).

R: So it was confusing that some things were written in the informational part but not written in the actual book?

T: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

I decided to give this student a bit of advice about reading informational text that is paired with picture books and then proceed onto asking her about her biographical poem.

I wanted to know if her having a difficult time understanding about William Kamkwamba was specific to the actual two texts she had read or to this type of pairing:

R: So, what you might want to think about in the future is that this is the same story. Both texts are about the same person. They tell the story in the picture book and then they give you additional information at the end about the person so you can learn more about him. This is an actual picture of what he
really looks like. Whereas this is a picture somebody drew, it is based off of his real life. Does that help you a little bit?

T: Yes.

R: So, when you did your research on your person, you researched Mary Walker. You read a piece of text like this (picture book), and then you read an informational piece. Was that helpful to you or more confusing?

T: It was helpful.

R: Why was it helpful?

T: Because I could write the poem much easier and learn about her more.

R: So why is that different than this? [*The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*]

T: There is a lot of stuff that they don’t really include in the book that they include on that paper.

R: So refresh my memory because I don’t know that book as well as you do.

T: In the book, they say she was a Civil War person. In the biography part, they don’t really include that. They just say stuff about her.

R: So, I am trying to understand how that was more helpful to you but with William it was more confusing. It had to do with the information in the back of the book about Mary? Do you want to look at it?

T: Yes.

R: Ok, tell me what you are thinking. You can look through the book if you want to.

T: They didn’t talk about what she did mostly. They only told what was most
R: In the back of the book, they only told what was most important?
T: No, in the front. In the story.
R: OK. In the back, do they add on to what they already said in the book?
T: Yes.
R: Do they give you more events or more detail?
T: Both of them.
R: OK. But it was done in a way that you thought was easier to understand?
T: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

While some participants had difficulty with these synoptically connected texts, several participants had a difficult time with texts that were paired as controlling texts. Controlling texts are multiple texts that are connected to a cornerstone, or central book. This difficulty was evidenced in the second unit of study on Hallmark People and again in the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement.

In the second unit of study, the participants read books about female pilots. All of these books were connected to a book about Amelia Earhart. The books were tiered by reading level, and the participants were arranged into groups after reading the cornerstone book about Amelia Earhart, *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*. After the participants read the books, they completed a matrix for the pilots in their small groups and then shared their work with the whole class (see Figure 7). The participants then analyzed their matrix to tell what the “big idea” was. Hassan talked about these books after he was asked if there were any projects that were hard:
R: Were there any projects that were really hard for you?

H: Yes.

R: What did you think was really hard?

H: The pilot books.

R: Why did you think that was really hard for you?

H: Because I didn’t know the stuff when they started doing the pilot stuff. It was hard to think about it and what I liked about it. We read about this one and this one. [Harriet Quimby] I liked that she was brave, and she still rode it even though it was wide open.

R: Did you think it was hard because there were so many books in it? Did that make it hard?

H: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

While Hassan shared that it was difficult for him to understand these books because he had a difficult time thinking about the books and what he liked about them, this was not part of the task expected of the participants. However, he also indicated that he had a difficult time because there were four books. This was not the only reason given by the participants for finding text connected in a controlling pattern difficult.
**Figure 7. Female Pilots Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Pilots</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Character Trait &amp; Evidence</th>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Inferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amelia Earhart</td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Determined – She did what she wanted to do. She flew across the ocean. She took Eleanor for a plane ride and went for a ride in a car with Eleanor.</td>
<td>She was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.</td>
<td>She was kind because she brought a gift for Eleanor. She was funny because she told jokes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessie Coleman</td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>Determined – she wanted to fly even though she was black, and she was a girl and people said she couldn’t.</td>
<td>She was the first licensed African American pilot in the world. She died in young when she was flying.</td>
<td>She went to France because there was more freedom there, and she couldn’t fly in America because she was a black woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriet Quimby</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Self-Sufficient because being brave, daring, and independent are all part of being self-sufficient.</td>
<td>She was the first woman to fly solo across the English Channel. She flew in a plane with an open cockpit. She was the first woman to get her pilot’s license.</td>
<td>She was honest because Gustav wanted her to have him fly the plane in disguise, but she said no. She was proud of her accomplishment. Even though she was not recognized because of the sinking of the Titanic, she was proud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie Gee</td>
<td>1930s &amp; 1940s</td>
<td>Courageous – she joined the WASP to fight for her country, and she could have died.</td>
<td>She was one of only two Chinese American Women Pilots to serve in the Airforce in WWII.</td>
<td>She was talented because she got picked and her friends didn’t. She was patient and determined because she had to go through a lot of training, and she also had to wait to become a pilot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sebastian also discussed how the controlling texts were difficult for him. He referred to the texts about black athletes that were used during the third unit of study. These texts were centered around Jackie Robinson and the book *Dad, Jackie, and Me*. This book tells Jackie Robinson’s story through the unique perspective of a young boy and his deaf father. The boy uses sign language to tell his father all about Jackie and his accomplishments. The two get the opportunity to go to Ebbets Field to watch Jackie play and are present for Jackie getting hurt but playing through his pain.

As stated previously, this text was surrounded by three other books on black athletes. Sebastian talked about his difficulty in an interview after the third unit of study. I reviewed each of the pairs of texts and then asked Sebastian several questions. When I asked him which texts were the most difficult to make connections between he responded as follows:

S: Satchel Paige.

R: Satchel Paige? So when we read all of the books together? What was difficult about that?

S: That, ummm, when I was drawing, I could do it right.

R: When you were drawing for your newspaper article?

S: Yes.

R: What about when we were in Mrs. Neff’s room, and we were making our matrix and then you wrote in your TABB book? You had to write what the big idea was. Did you think this was hard, or did you think it was easy?

S: It was a little bit hard.
R: OK. Why was it hard?

S: Because, it took me a lot of thinking.

R: OK. So you had to think really hard to come up with entry for your TABB book?

S: Yes. (Interview, November 24, 2013)

Even though Sebastian indicated that analyzing his matrix and formulating the main idea or “big idea” took him a lot of thinking, his response was a surface level response. He responded, “What is the big idea? The big idea is that they all played sports” (Artifact, November 15, 2013). While all of these individuals did play sports, there was much more substance in these books than this. Sebastian’s response was a surface level response.

As stated previously, conflicting texts are texts that are connected but have some discrepancy in between the two story lines. The books discussed previously about Rosa Parks, Rosa and Back of the Bus are conflicting texts. These texts were read during the Civil Rights unit. Both of these texts focus on Rosa Parks. The conflict in the two books is where Rosa Parks actually sits. In the book Back of the Bus, Rosa Parks sits in the front of the bus, much like students traditionally learn in their social studies class. However, in the book Rosa, she sits in the neutral section. While texts paired in a conflicting manner often motivate students to want to learn the truth and to conduct research, Camila communicated in an interview that she found this to be the hardest to make connections between and to draw conclusions:

C: mmm. . . the hardest was. These two.
R: The books about Rosa Parks?
C: Yes.
R: Why were they hard?
S: Because everyone knew Rosa Parks got arrested. In this book she sits in the back and in this book she sits in the front. It is hard to make an inference because in this book she sits in the front and in this book she sits in the neutral section.
R: Could you make connections between these two books?
C: In these two books, Rosa Parks got arrested. They are the same that they are sitting in the back of the bus. So you have to put your money in the front of the bus, then go out of the bus, go to the other door, and go to the back.
R: It sounds like you really understood the books pretty well. Did you?
C: Yes.
R: Did you have to work harder to understand it?
C: Yes. In this book, she sits in the neutral and in this book she is sitting in the front so it is difficult to make a connection.
R: So what were you thinking when you listened to those two books? What did it make you think?
C: I was thinking. . . she made it. . . with the white people and the black people. (Interview, November 24, 2013)

Camila talked about how she found it difficult to make connections between these two books, as well. However, as she talked, it was evident that she had a good
understanding of the two books. She was able to talk about how the books were both the same and that in both books Rosa Parks was arrested, but she found the fact that the two texts were conflicting in telling where Rosa Parks sat confusing to her.

These participants’ responses indicate how making intertextual connections can be difficult but can evolve over time. It also shows that while students may need to think at high levels and may find this thinking to be difficult, it does not mean that it is not possible or that it is not lucrative. Nor does it mean that their thinking is incorrect just because it is difficult. In addition, it also shows how all of the participants differed in their thinking. While some of the participants found some particular texts to be difficult to understand and to connect to, in most cases, they were able to work through these to be successful. The amount of time the participants took to gain an understanding also differed from participant to participant. This leads to the conclusion that intertextuality is a way of thinking rather than an isolated strategy.

**Intertextuality: A Way of Thinking**

Intertextuality is different than many readings strategies that are learned and employed in the various content areas. Intertextuality is actually a way of thinking. Evidence of this was observed in Camila’s response telling what she had learned about her Hallmark Person. Camila had researched and composed her biographical poem and informational paragraph about Henrietta Levitt. Her response represented that her content knowledge had evolved and so did her ability to articulate this knowledge. It also indicated that when individuals begin thinking in an intertextual manner, it permeates their thinking.
After conducting her research using two intertextually connected texts and creating her two compositions on her person, she participated in a Share Fair and intertextual analysis. She was able to connect her person to Maria Mitchell. She wrote, “Both are scientists. Both are observers. Both are astronomers, are watchers. They use telescopes to see the stars and the sky” (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013). She continued to share her knowledge by writing, “They are both young. They study scientists and they are American and first astronomers. They’re both girls. They’re bright women.” Camila’s ability to think intertextually did not cease once the intertextual analysis was complete.

Her intertextual thinking continued when she was asked what she knew about her specific person, Henrietta Levitt. She wrote: “Henrietta Leavitt was connected to Mary Mitchell because they were both astronomers and scientists. They are both Americans, and they are both first women astronomers. They are both watchers and observers, and they both study the sky and the stars. They both died. Both are intelligent” (Questionnaire, November 6, 2013). While Camila wrote this response in much of the same words as when she wrote her response during the intertextual analysis, it was written several hours later. This thinking was communicated in much the same way as it was initially and without referring back to her initial response. It was also written naturally in an intertextual manner because this was not an expectation or requirement communicated to the participants.

As the participants experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, they made connections between the texts they were reading and also
beyond the texts they were reading. This was evidenced on many occasions throughout the study. One example came from Monique and her written response after reading *Henry’s Freedom Box* and *Freedom Song*, two conflicting texts about Henry “Box” Brown. Monique wrote, “Henry traveled across the ocean even though he escaped from his master. He took a boat like the immigrants in our other books to be free and to experience more. He missed his family like in the other books” (Artifact, October 11, 2013). This showed how thinking intertextually may be something we teach students, it actually becomes a way of thinking. Monique’s connection went back to the first unit of study which focused on immigration. It included a connection in Henry’s actions but also in Henry’s feelings.

Another way that the participants made connections beyond the texts they were reading on a specific day was by making personal connections. Some of the participants spoke about how learning in an intertextual manner helped them make connections to their own life. Talia shared how when she learned in an intertextual manner, she actually was able to make her own connections:

R: Can you talk a little bit about how I used two books to teach you?

T: They sometimes connected with each other?

R: Only sometimes?

T: All of the time.

R: So what do you think about that?

T: It was cool because sometimes it helped me make connections to my own life.

R: So, do you think that reading two books helped you make connections to your
own life more than if I would have only read one book?

T: Yes. (Interview, September 30, 2013)

Talia was not the only one who made personal connections, Hassan shared that he felt that the pictures they drew stimulated this type of thinking. This information was shared after asking about the projects we had done during the first unit of study on immigration:

R: Out of the projects, which stood out to you the most?
H: When we did the posters about immigrating, we wrote what we learned about immigrating, and we drew pictures about it, and I liked that.

R: You liked drawing the pictures.

H: Yes. We also wrote details.

R: What did you like about the pictures?

H: When we learned about Emma’s problems. I liked how she helped the poor people.

R: What did you think about adding your own pictures?

H: umm. . . it was cool, and I think about my own stuff. The pictures helped me make connections to myself. (Interview, September 30, 2013)

The participants showed throughout the study that when they experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, thinking intertextually became part of their everyday thinking. It strengthened the connections they made between what they had learned previously and what they were currently learning. It also strengthened the connections between what they were learning in their
content area classrooms and their own personal experiences. This lent to their learning being real to them. While important in all of the content areas, to see evidence of this in social studies, a discipline that students may have a difficult time connecting to, was impressive and worth noting.

**Dispositions**

There were several dispositions observed during the process of this research study. According to Webster’s Dictionary, a disposition is a “tendency, inclination; natural attitude toward things (2005, p. 142). Evidence of this was found both in qualitative and quantitative data. As previously stated, qualitative data was collected in the form of questionnaires, artifacts, observations, and interviews. Quantitative data was collected from Likert-style attitude inventories. The dispositions observed during this research study are presented in three subthemes: increased focus, the turning point, and an intrinsic motivation to learn more.

**Increased Focus**

There was an increase in the participants’ focus throughout the study. This was evidenced in observing the participants’ mannerisms and actions as well as listening to their conversations. The increase of focus was not observed during the first unit of study on Immigration. Actually, the first time this was observed was at the conclusion of the second unit of study during the Hallmark Unit Share Fair.

After the second, third, and fourth units of study, the participants engaged in a Share Fair. The Share Fair was a time for the students, teachers, and guests to come together to celebrate the students’ successes. After the second and fourth unit of studies,
the participants also engaged in an intertextual analysis of their compositions. The intertextual analyses took place before the Share Fair and were structured in a manner for the participants to be successful. However, they were not the most formal or structured. It was more of an open environment for the participants to learn from each other, and determine how their creations connected to each other in intertextual ways. During these sessions, the participants were excited about learning from their peers. Their focus increased. This was even evident in participants who were often unfocused and reluctant to learn.

The first Share Fair took place after the second unit of study focusing on Hallmark People. This was the first time where the participants had branched off on their own to learn more about a topic, or in this case a person, of their choice. During the Share Fair and intertextual analysis for the biographical poems, I observed many of the participants, even those who were usually distracted, become much more focused. The participants were eager to share. One of the participant’s performance particularly stood out. DeShawn was often difficult to engage in learning and to keep on task. As a matter of fact, during the first unit of study, he did not complete any of the tasks from the study. However, in the second unit of study, he completed all of the projects and did so with great success. He was excited to participate in the Share Fair. I talked with DeShawn at the end of the study, and he talked about how participating in the various Share Fairs actually motivated him (Interview, December 20, 2013).

During the intertextual analysis and Share Fair, DeShawn was more than intrigued with one of the people his friends had researched, Philipe Petit. His friend had learned
about Petit by reading *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* (Gerstein, 2003). This Caldecott winning picture book, tells the story of how Philipe Petit strung a rope between the Twin Towers and walked across it, high above the New York City crowd who had gathered to watch him:

DeShawn was amazed that this was a true story. He asked, “You mean that really happened?” He wanted to hear and to learn more. He was full of questions and wonderings about this person who he found to be remarkable. “How could he do such a thing?” It was actually difficult to get him to move on. (Field notes, November 6, 2013)

However, when DeShawn did finally move on, he quickly made connections between who he studied and Petit. DeShawn had studied Ida Lewis and read the book *The Bravest Woman in America* (Moss, 2011). He shared that the two books were connected because “they were both young and brave and intelligent. He walked over the Twin Towers, and Ida saved people. This is a connection” (Artifact, November 6, 2013). There was certainly a shift in DeShawn’s disposition from the previous unit. During the previous unit, his attitude or disposition appeared to be unmotivated and uninterested. He did not turn anything in and was often times observed as being off-task and needing continuous monitoring and guidance. During the second unit of study, his disposition shifted as he completed all of the learning experiences and was eager to share what he had learned as well as learn about what others had learned as he participated in the Share Fair and intertextual analysis.
DeShawn was responding with the facts he presented in his biographical poem (Artifact, November 6, 2013), what he had learned from his research and composition, and also in his intertextual analysis. From memory and without referring back to the text, he shared that Ida Lewis was a “brave woman, and she is young and beautiful. She never complained about anything. She did what she was told to do, and she loved saving people. She was a nice person” (Artifact, November 6, 2013). In addition, DeShawn was going above and beyond the expectations of the learning experience. Although only required to make connections to one of the two people he was sharing with, he also made connections to the third person in his group who researched Annie Taylor after reading *Queen of the Falls* (Van Allsburg, 2011). *Queen of the Falls* is the story of Annie Taylor, a 63-year-old school teacher, who went over Niagara Falls in a barrel in 1901 with the purpose of gaining fame and fortune. He made connections to the fact that both of these women were brave as well as the fact that they both were in the water during this act of bravery (Artifact, November 6, 2013).

DeShawn was not alone. Once the participants got started, they were eager to share what they had created. This was an interesting shift for them. Many times prior to this, they were off task and needed prompting to stay focused and productive. However, it was obvious that they were focused and enjoyed sharing during the intertextual analysis and Share Fair. “You could tell this by watching their faces. Many students had smiles and straight posture. They showed their eagerness. They also showed a sense of confidence. Prior to this event, I had seen this very few times” (Field notes, November 6, 2013). This eagerness was noted several times throughout the study.
Another example of participants showing eagerness was observed in one of the groups who participated in this same intertextual analysis. One of the groups finished their analysis and sharing early. They decided, on their own, to draw visual representations to match what they had learned and the people they had researched (Field notes, November 6, 2013). This was most impressive because the members of this group were often not on task and needed repeated guidance to complete the tasks presented to them.

This increased focus was not solely evident during the various Share Fairs. It was also evident during the actual units of study. An example was noted while observing Diego during the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement. Diego was a student who often needed supported and redirection to be successful in the classroom. When we read *Busing Brewster* and *This School is Not White* during the unit on the Civil Rights Movement, we paused at episodic moments throughout the reading so the participants could document their learning and thinking in their Listening Logs. After we finished the reading, the participants wrote in their interactive foldable. “Diego was excited when he was finished writing. He wanted to know what to do next. This is a student who is often off task and often has to be encouraged to keep focus and to work” (Field notes, November 13, 2013). During the lesson, Diego drew a conclusion that the children went to school and got bullied. This was an excellent conclusion for him, and by him using this language, it was evident that he was connecting to what we were learning about. Diego was not the only participant who was focused in a way that was unique from prior practices.
DeShawn showed great focus while reading and writing in his Listening Log, as well. “He was writing notes on his own. This is something that he has never done before” (Field Notes, November 13, 2013). As previously stated, DeShawn was a student who often had a difficult time focusing and paying attention which often effected his learning. However, the behavior observed today was much different than what was observed in the past. This was very similar with Adrian who also often had a difficult time paying attention and being engaged (Field Notes, November 13, 2013). This increased focus was obvious in these students’ dispositions and also in their performance.

While reading Busing Brewster and This School is Not White, some of the participants were excited about how many facts and observations they were able to record in their Listening Logs. Kiara yelled, “I have twenty-one facts!” (Field notes, November 13, 2013). Their focus also paid off in their responses. After reading the two books, Mrs. Neff asked the students what they thought happened. DeShawn responded with enthusiasm, “This family made it the way it is for us today!” (Field notes, November 13, 2013). They were connecting the fictitious actions of Brewster in Busing Brewster and the actual actions of the Carter family in This School Is Not White! to the way schools are today in America.

As the participants progressed through the various units of study, their focus continued to improve. In the final unit of study, it was observed that as the participants finished composing their picture books, their talking was actually focused on sharing with each other what they had written rather than have the off-task conversations, which were so characteristic before (Field notes, December 19, 2013). They were now
progressing to using dialogue as a form of celebration as well as a tool to further their learning as they shared what they had learned and composed with the other participants who were sitting around them. Their actions accompanied their dialogue and showed that even after accomplishing the expectations of the day, they were excited about their learning, focused on what they had learned, and wanted to further this by sharing with others and also listening to what others had learned. This was certainly a change or a “turn” in their learning.

**The Turning Point**

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2013), a turning point is when a significant change occurs. Throughout the study, there were changes in the participants’ attitude towards learning. Based on the participants’ attitudes, this turning point was influential in their learning and performance. Thus, a turning point is being defined as that point in a student’s learning where they transition from the tension and insecurity often found in learning, which is sometimes coupled with frustration, to excitement and confidence in being able to be successful which is often accompanied with actual success and positive performance. This is a subtheme of a disposition in that it is a shift in attitude. What is unique about a turning point is the process the participants traveled through before and after reaching the turning point. This “turning point” was evidenced in many ways and many times throughout the study.

As stated in the definition, the turning point began with insecurity, tension, and sometimes frustration and transitioned to confidence and a belief in the ability to be successful. Once the participants reached the turning point, they were able to continue
with their learning and with the performance task they were engaged in with great success. However, this turning point did not always begin being negative and then evolve to being positive, where it stayed. There was often a back and forth movement in this attitude towards learning. Depending on the topics learned and the learning experiences the participants were engaged in, they could reach the turning point where they had confidence in their belief and ability to be successful but then travel back to being insecure and frustrated within the same unit of study.

Multiple forms of evidence supporting the subtheme of a turning point are presented in five dimensions. These dimensions of the turning point describe the back and forth journey in the participants’ learning, perceptions of the turning point, changed attitudes towards learning, varying levels of support for success, and perceptions of learning and thinking. Because there was a vast amount of findings surrounding this turning point, the subheadings, presented as dimensions, were created in an attempt to make these findings understandable and meaningful.

**A back and forth journey.** The first dimension of the turning point is the back and forth journey. This posits that learning is a back and forth motion and that even when learning and success are achieved, forward motion is not always continued without any steps backward.

The first time a turning point was evidenced was in the second unit of study based on Hallmark People. In analyzing this turning point, a changed attitude towards learning was found. Evidence for this was found both qualitatively and quantitatively. Two turning points were observed during this second unit of study.
It was during the lesson when the participants read *Henry’s Freedom Box* and *Freedom Song* where the first turning point in the participants’ learning was identified. During this learning experience, the participants were to write a word that would represent Henry and cite evidence to support their word using both of the texts. This was the first time during the study that the teacher did not have to prompt or guide students to a great degree. “Students were able to complete their entry in their step book without hesitation and with very little support” (Field Notes, October 17, 2013). This confidence resulted in performance as the majority of the participants were able to perform successfully. Seventeen out of the eighteen (94%) participants were able to respond to this task in manner that was considered to be reasonable. Of these eighteen participants who engaged in this learning experience, ten of the eighteen (56%) wrote responses that were substantial. This left only one out of eighteen (6%) participant responding in a manner that was not reasonable (Artifact, October 17, 2013).

This confidence in learning and performing coupled with knowledge of content material was further assessed as the participants engaged in a quick write. For the quick write, the participants were to write about Henry “Box” Brown. They could write about what they had learned, what they wondered, and what connections they made. Their success in this task was documented in my field notes:

At first I observed the same blank stares when students were asked to write. We explained that there was not a right or wrong answer here. Students were given a very short time to do this (5 – 10 minute) which honored what a quick write is. The students were also told to just write –
that was what was most important. Students were to write about the
connections they could make. They could write about what they wondered
and what they had learned about Henry “Box” Brown. Upon analysis, the
majority were accurate, on topic, and many students raised good questions.
This is the first time when students wrote without resistance. (Field Notes,
October 17, 2013)

The participants were able to sustain their confidence and positive performance
during the next learning experience which occurred several days afterwards. This was
the lesson where we read the picture book _The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind_ and then the
informational text on William Kamkwambwe. While reading the informational text, the
participants were to mark their text with what they felt was what surprising to them,
where they could make connections, and what they wanted to remember. They were
instructed to think about both texts and how they interacted together. The participants
were able to mark the informational text successfully and without apprehension.

“Whereas the last time we marked text that was much shorter, it was in a similar fashion
and many students struggled. In contrast, more students were able to tend to the task
before them this time” (Field Notes, October 21, 2013). After reading the picture book
and reading and marking the informational text, the participants were to record their
thoughts in their Step Books. Similar to how they marked their informational text, they
were to write something that surprised them, something they could connect to, and
something they wanted to remember. In contrast to how the participants had written in
their Step books before, students readily began their entries this time (Field Notes,
October 21, 2013). Again, there was a correlation to the participants readily tending to this task and their performance. Fifteen out of the eighteen (83%) participants responded of the tasks. All eighteen (100%) participants provided information that was reasonable. Of these eighteen participants, eleven (61%) participants provided information that was not only reasonable but was also substantial. Their confidence in being able to start the task right away was reflected in their performance (Artifact, October 21, 2013).

Being successful in a learning experience, does not warrant the experience being easy. Actually, two of the participants talked about how these texts were the most difficult for them during this unit. As previously reported, the participants said they were difficult because they had a lot of decisions to make and because the way that the book was presented was very different from the way the informational text was presented. However, these two participants were both successful in their step book entries. One actually provided an answer that was substantial. He wrote:

William Kamkwamba is important because he made a windmill at a small age, and he helped his village Wimbe. My connection is that he thought of the idea in the library, and got a book about windmills from the library. [Both texts addressed this] Something I want to remember is that he built a windmill at the age of fourteen. (Artifact, October 21, 2013)

As the participants continued to experience intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, they began to have more confidence in their abilities and were able to work through texts that were complex as well as tasks that were complex.
The participants’ success and positive attitude towards learning continued as they interacted with the book *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing*. As previously discussed, the participants were to write about the connection they could make between the main character of this story, P.T. Barnum and the other books read. I understood and acknowledged that this was not an easy task. (Field Notes, October 23, 2013). After reading, the participants were to write who they thought Phineas Barnum connected to. They were also to support their response with evidence. One of the participants asked if they could make connections to other books they had read such as the books they had read during the first unit of study. This demonstrated their level of confidence as they would not only be connecting to the texts read recently during the second unit of study, but also to many other texts. The participants’ actions showed their confidence and self-assurance. I wrote about this in my field notes after conducting an observation:

> What I observed was that most of the students were able to get started right away. They had a designated amount of time to complete their response on the special paper given to them. They added visual representation to represent their thinking. (Field Notes, October 23, 2013)

Not only were participants confident enough to begin right away, the majority of participants were successful in their writing. As previously reported, all twenty (100%) of the participants created writing that was reasonable while eighteen (90%) of the participants’ writing was at a level that was significant/substantial (Artifact, October 23, 2013). Just as with the performance task linked to Henry “Box” Brown, this task was not easy for everyone. Two of the six participants interviewed indicated that this was
difficult for them. Different reasons were given for this being difficult. Dymetrus stated that this was difficult because he really does not like writing (Interview, November 10, 2013). Even though Dymetrus was a student who was an English language learner who had not yet mastered the craft of fluent writing, upon analysis his written response went above and beyond the expectations in what he produced (see Figure 8).

As represented in Figure 8, Dymetrus connected P.T. Bailey to both Clara from Brave Girl and William Kamkwamba from The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind. He gave substantial and significant support for his response and his picture represented all components of his writing despite him feeling that this was a difficult task.

Kayla also shared that Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing was difficult for her as we talked during an interview:

R: So looking at these books, which were the hardest?
K: The hardest was Twenty-One Elephants.
R: Why was that the hardest?
K: The writing was a little tricky for my mind. I didn’t grasp what was being told of me to do. Then I when I thought things through, I finally did end up getting it.
R: So you felt like you were successful, you just had to think about it?
K: Yes.
R: Do you know why you had to think harder?
K: I don’t know. I think it is just because the book was a little bit all over the place. Like one minute you are at the circus, then another minute you are at
the parade.

R: Do you think it was hard because you could connect to any of the books instead of the giving you two books to connect to?

Figure 8. Dymetru’s Twenty-One Elephants Writing
K: ummm. . . . I think it was a little hard.

R: It was a little hard to think it all out in your head?

K: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

Even though Kayla admitted that this text and task was difficult for her, she also talked about how when she thought things through, she was able to make sense of it. She had the confidence to know that even though she didn’t understand what to do and have a solid understanding of the text at first, that working through it and being active in her thinking would help her be successful. She, just as with Dymetrus, went above and beyond in her response. She connected P.T. Barnum to Harriet Quimby from *Brave Harriet: The First Woman to Fly the English Channel* because she thought both individuals were proud. She also connected Barnum to *The Who Harnessed the Wind*, *Who Says Women Can’t be Doctors*, and *Brave Girl* because they were all laughed at. She gave substantial and significant evidence and details to support her responses.

As previously stated, once the participants reached the turning point, they did not always keep this confidence and sense of security throughout the remainder of the study. They often traveled back to being insecure and frustrated before moving forward again. Sometimes, they did not even keep this confidence throughout the remainder of the unit of study. In this second unit of study on Hallmark People, it was the very next day after the participants were so successful with their writing based on *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing* when they regressed to being frustrated and insecure. Coupled with these attitudes were participants acting out in ways that were disruptive as well as demanding.
This was the day that the participants began their research on a Hallmark Person of their choosing.

Since the participants were successful in the previous learning experiences, it seemed reasonable that they would be successful here, too. There were supports built into this learning experience that should have lent to them feeling confident and being successful. First, the participants were able to choose their own books, and Mrs. Neff and I were able to honor most of their choices. Therefore, the participants should have enjoyed the experience of researching and writing about the person they chose. Second, the books were tiered so the participants would be reading a book written at their reading level. I hoped this would lead the participants to continuing to feel confident as well as empowered. I also hoped that this would give them the opportunity to extend their thinking.

The first writing session as well as the next two were very different than what was expected. As stated previously, the books were tiered, so even though the participants were reading independently and individually, they were reading a book written at their reading level. They should have been able to do this confidently and with success. In my field notes I wrote, “Many of these students wouldn’t even read their books independently. Some of them did and asked what the words were that they did not know. Others would not try to conduct any of the research without me guiding them” (Field Notes, October 25, 2013, p. 47). They displayed the attitude that without support, they would not perform. This tension or friction, continued during the next several times the participants worked on this project, despite the time and effort spent trying to prepare the
lesson and the materials ahead of time to further support them. Many participants responded to this lack of confidence or insecurity by acting out and being disruptive. Other participants would not attempt any of the tasks unless they had a teacher helping them.

On the third day of this project, the participants reached a turning point in their learning and in their attitude towards learning. There was a clear shift from the majority of the participants having a negative attitude toward learning and performing, to the majority of the participants buying in to what they needed to do. On this day, there were participants who were ready to publish, participants who were not ready to publish but were on track with what they were doing and able to work independently, participants who needed help with their research, and participants who needed help with writing their actual biographical poems. The lesson on the third day was prepared in response to this so that the participants at the same stage were able to work in the same location as participants who were at the same stage:

What I noticed was that the students who were ready to publish dove into publishing. They were self-driven. The students who were working independently needed only a few reminders but were able to continue what they were working on and finish. As they worked, I checked their progress and gave them the go ahead to publish when they were ready. They seemed productive with this arrangement. The teacher and I sat with the other two groups. Some students were very needy, while others seemed to benefit simply from the close proximity. It made me wonder
about their confidence level. For some students, I was simply breaking
the poem down, line-by-line and reading the directions. For others I was
merely reminding them to look at their research. Others needed more
support. Students who had previously only displayed disruptive behavior
began to show pride in their work. I could tell this by their body language.
They were excited to be able to participate actively. They were excited to
be successful and this motivated them to continue. (Field Notes,
October, 29, 2013)

Essentially what happened during this third day of creating biographical poems was that
the participants were met at the place they were in their performance and in their
confidence level. By doing this, their confidence and attitude toward learning increased
as did their success. Twenty-one out of twenty-two (95%) completed their biographical
poem project successfully and were able to participate in the intertextual analysis as well
as the Share Fair (Artifact, November 6, 2013).

Not only were the majority of the participants successful in their learning, many
of the participants shared that they enjoyed this learning experience. Their attitude
towards learning was positive. Mia talked about this in an interview. She shared that she
liked “the poem because you could actually write a poem so people would know about
the person. People could learn from you” (Interview, November 10, 2013). Talia also
shared a positive attitude towards learning and writing when talking about her poem. She
shared this in an interview:

R: What did you think about the poem that you wrote?
T: It was fun because it was my favorite one out of all of them.

R: It was?

T: Yes.

R: What did you like about it?

T: What’s her name? Oh, Mary. She changed the way we wear pants.

R: You researched and wrote about Mary Walker?

T: Yes. I got to write about things that I remembered.

R: Did you like making the poem up from your research?

T: Yes. First, I had a hard time, but I kept on getting it.

R: You had a hard time writing your poem at first? Then how did you feel when you published it?

T: I felt proud of myself for doing it, and I got to learn about someone else.

R: Do you think you felt more proud because it was more difficult?

T: Yes.

R: So writing the poem, was your favorite. Am I right?

T: Yes. (Interview, November 10, 2013)

As with the participant who talked about *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, these two participants shared a recognition and understanding that even though the task was difficult or complex, they had a positive attitude toward learning after completing the task. They were able to work through the difficultness of the task to be successful. The tension students experienced in their learning transitioned to them being successful. In this instance, twenty out of twenty-one of the participants (96%) composed a
biographical poem, informational paragraph, and visual representation based on their Hallmark Person with success. Their compositions were accurate and represented their learning about their person (Artifact, November 4, 2013).

This performance showed that the transition from the participants feeling tension and then success was linked with their performance. The participants showed this extreme tension and this turning point in all of the units of study with the exception of one. During the first unit of study on Immigration, the participants did not reach this turning point. Consequently, their responses and learning never transitioned to the majority of the participants performing in a deep and meaningful manner. For example, after reading Good-bye Havana, Hola New York and When Jessie Came Across the Sea, the participants created a H-Map. Upon analysis, fourteen of the twenty (70%) participants who responded did so with surface level responses when communicating about the similarities between the two books. Twelve of the twenty (60%) participants responded at the surface level when identifying the differences (Artifact, September 11, 2013). Therefore, the majority of the participants did not respond in a manner that was substantial. In addition, there was not a transition in their attitudes towards learning where they shifted from being negative to being positive which was also reflected in their performance.

**Perceptions of the turning point.** The second dimension of the turning point deals with perception. Before reaching the first turning point, the participants were reluctant in their learning and were often disruptive in their behavior. This was evidenced by the participants, the classroom teacher, and myself and was written about in
field notes frequently and discussed with both the participants and with the classroom teacher. The participants showed various times in their learning where they did not appreciate learning in this manner and were not excited about their learning. One example was when one of the participants groaned out loud and said, “Oh, here she comes again!” (Field Notes, September 19, 2013). This particular participant voiced what others seemed to think in their actions and their performance.

It was on this same day that I wrote about how complacent the participants often were in their learning. We had just read, *Apple Pie, 4th of July* (Wong, 2006) and *One Green Apple* (Bunting, 2006). The participants varied in showing their attitude towards learning during this instructional lesson as well as their performance. I wrote:

Some students were able to draw conclusions and make inferences.
However, for many it appeared to be quite difficult. The teacher and I felt like we were pulling teeth to get the students to think. For some of the students, it almost feels as if they expect to be spoonfed. For some, when they are not given this support, it seems to jumpstart their thinking.
For others it does not, and many of them become disruptive and do not use their time wisely. (Field Notes, September 19, 2013)

The participants’ attitudes towards their learning and their performance often went hand-in-hand. In reviewing the participants’ performance on this learning experience, many were not successful to the degree we had hoped.

Another example of this negative attitude towards learning was documented in my field notes later on in the study. This entry was written after preparing a lesson for
the participants where they would continue composing their biographical poem. I had spent many hours working on this lesson and building supports into it so that the participants would be able to be successful and so Mrs. Neff and I would be able to guide them to being successful. I wrote, “I really thought with all of the extra effort I put into preparing the lesson that it would go smoothly. I was wrong!!!” My writing continued to document the students’ mannerisms, “The students were demanding and when they weren’t tended to right away they became very disruptive” (Field Notes, October 28, 2013).

After observing this turning point with the participants during the second and third unit of study, I talked with Mrs. Neff, the social studies and writing teacher, to see if she had observed the same type of mannerism and performance in the participants. This conversation took place after school during the time the participants were composing their Tri-text picture book. Mrs. Neff linked the turning point to participants’ confidence level:

R: It seems like whenever we start a big project, the students become really frustrated. When I was reading their response journals, a lot of them started off by saying, “I am frustrated. I hate this. I don’t know what to write about.” Then, it seems like they turn a corner and then they are OK and they move forward. Do you see that?

N: I see that a lot. They don’t get it. They don’t get it. They don’t get it... and then... I think that they don’t have any confidence. They don’t have any confidence in themselves. Once they write something down, and it is
corrected, then they know they have good ideas, and then they are OK with it.

R: Yes.

N: Because I had some people who I told that this is good so far and now you need to write the rest of your story. They would write so far, and it would be good and then all of a sudden they would stop, and the rest wouldn’t make any sense. I would tell them, this story is good up until here so you need to finish your story. I had a couple of people who were like that.

R: So when you said that, were they able to do it?

N: Yes. (Interview, December 20, 2013)

I talked with several of the participants about the turning point in their learning. What I learned was that there were many reasons for the friction or tension in their learning, and there were several ways that the participants dealt with this tension. Mrs. Neff’s beliefs about students needing to get started and needing to have a higher level of confidence were reaffirmed by talking to Camila after reviewing her reflection journal. This was a journal the participants wrote in every day while composing their Tri-Text picture book. I told Camila that I had some things that I was wondering about:

R: One of the things that I noticed in your writing is that at the very beginning, you seemed to feel unsure of what you were doing. . . . On the first page, you talk about how you are nervous about writing the story.

C: Yes.

R: So what were you nervous about?
C: That I said a word wrong or that the story doesn’t connect to the book.

R: Oh. So you were worried about your writing?

C: Yes.

Camila shared that she was worried about writing in English because she had moved back and forth to the United States from Puerto Rico six times. She shared that she wrote better in Spanish. However, she also shared that once she went through the entire process, she felt much better:

R: So, now that you have went through this whole process, how do you feel?

C: I feel . . . excited.

R: What are you excited about?

C: I am excited because . . . . I am excited to do anything I can to do what I try to do. Like I understand. (Interview, December 20, 2013)

Some of the participants shared that they just needed to get started for their apprehension and nervousness to turn to being successful. For these participants, actually starting to write gave them the confidence they needed to continue. One of these participants was Dymetrus:

R: The first two times you wrote in your journal, you talked about you being confused, and you were worried that you were not going to do good. Do you remember that?

D: Yes.

R: What helped you through that?

D: ummm. . . . I don’t know. I just started writing then I started understanding
better and then I started doing better and then it started making things easier.

(Interview, December 20, 2013)

As previously stated, many of the participants acted out before they reached the turning point in their learning. I wanted to know more about this. I wondered if they knew they were acting out what their reasoning was. DeShawn was a student who often acted out and was not engaged in the learning experiences in the classroom. Consequently, he was sometimes unsuccessful. As previously mentioned, DeShawn did not complete one learning experience during the first unit of study. However, he completed the majority of the learning experiences in the second, third, and fourth unit of study. I talked with DeShawn about this during our interview. We also talked about reaching a turning point in his learning:

R: So, what I have noticed is . . . and I have noticed this with several students, not just you. What I have noticed is that it sees like you go through this process where you don’t understand, and you feel uncomfortable about that and then all of a sudden, you do better. I call it a turning point. It seems like once you reach this turning point, and then you understand and you start going, and you do very well. Do you ever feel like that?

D: I felt frustrated. Sometimes I forgot my train of thought, and then I am like oh, yea that was what I wanted to write about.

R: So, were you really frustrated at the beginning when you didn’t know what to write?

D: Yes.
R: What do you do when you get frustrated?

D: I talk. I talk to other people so I can try to figure out what to do. I try to get help. So I talk to Garrett. I asked him, are we supposed to do this, or are we supposed to do that? Sometimes he tells me, and sometimes he doesn’t. Like it is kind of hard because every problem, I always talk, and I always wait. Even at home, I do stuff, and then there is the last minute, my mom is always saying that I should be doing it, and I say to just give me time.

R: So, when you are talking, do you always talk about your story, or do you think you are talking about other things?

D: Sometimes when I get real frustrated I talk to Garrett. He can tell me everything and so can Jayden. Sometimes I just talk. I write slower, way slower than them, and then when we are done, we just talk.

R: Do you think you get off task, and sometimes you misbehave a bit?

D: Yes.

R: So what changes that for you? What do you do? Because I noticed that you, too reached that turning point when you started doing really well. What happened?

D: I didn’t know, I was just thinking. . . man. . . they are just doing so good, forget it. I am going to just start and then I really want to the Share Fair. Then when I am about half way done, I know I have to finish. (Interview, December 20, 2013).
Once DeShawn completed his Tri-Text picture book, he shared how he felt about his accomplishment. “I am proud of me thinking that much. Usually I didn’t. Like usually I don’t learn so much. I learned so much about the Civil Rights” (Interview, December 20, 2013).

Although each of these participants shared different information about the steps they took to reaching the turning point in their learning and what helped them reach this, they were similar in that they each felt tension and insecurity in their learning but after working through this tension were able to be successful. They also shared feelings such as pride and enjoyment for learning.

**Changed attitude towards learning.** The third dimension of the turning point addresses a changed attitude towards learning. The participants recognized when they had reached the turning point as was evidenced in their performance and in their conversations. This showed as a changed attitude towards learning because once they reached this turning point, they became confident and enthusiastic about their learning. As many shared, they also became motivated to complete the learning experience and to do so successfully.

These findings were reaffirmed in quantitative data as shown by Table 18. This table shows the means of the participants’ attitudes when responding to the statement “I like social studies.” As indicated by looking at the mean scores, the participants’ attitudes towards social studies actually decreased after the first unit of study. Prior to beginning the study, the mean for the participants stating that they liked social studies was 4.263 (SD = .733). After participating in the first unit of study on Immigration, it
decreased to 3.790 (SD = 1.584). The unit of study on Immigration was the only unit of study out of the four where the participants did not reach a turning point.

Table 18

*Descriptive Data for Liking Social Studies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert-Style Test</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest for Study/Beginning of Study</td>
<td>4.263</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Immigration/Pretest Hallmark People</td>
<td>3.790</td>
<td>1.584</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Hallmark People/Pretest Civil Rights</td>
<td>4.474</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Civil Rights/Pretest Tri-Text</td>
<td>4.579</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Tri-Text/Conclusion of Study</td>
<td>4.632</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

As demonstrated by qualitative data, participants experienced a turning point in the second unit of study. Consequently, their mean for liking social studies increased to 4.474 (SD = .964). The participants also experienced turning points in the third and fourth units of study. Their attitude towards liking social studies increased in the third unit of study which is demonstrated with the mean score of 4.579 (SD = .607). This mean score was similar in the fourth unit of study at 4.632 (SD = .496).

The descriptive data for liking social studies represented a change in the mean scores over the course of the study. To determine if this change was statistically
significant, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA was run in SPSS. These results represent statistical significance, suggesting a difference over time in liking social studies. Since sphericity was violated, the Epsilon values were used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the overall $F$ test. Results of the Huynh-Feldt are presented in Table 19. These results were statistically significant, $F(2.435) = 43.829$, $p = .012$.

Table 19

*Analysis of Variance for Liking Social Studies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>$SS$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$MS$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>8.905</td>
<td>2.435</td>
<td>3.657</td>
<td>4.516</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>35.495</td>
<td>43.829</td>
<td>.810</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44.390</td>
<td>46.264</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p < .05$

To determine where the statistical significance occurred, a post hoc test was run. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between participants’ responses several times throughout the course of the study. There was a statistical significance between the first time the participants completed the Likert-Style attitude inventory at the very beginning of the study and the fifth and final Likert-Style attitude inventory, $p = .015$. This final attitude inventory was administered after the participants created their Tri-Text picture book and participated in an intertextual analysis of their Tri-Text picture book and another student’s Tri-Text creation.
There was also statistical significance found in comparing the second time participants completed Likert-style attitude inventories after completing the first unit of study on Immigration and the third Likert-style attitude inventory which was administered after the Hallmark People unit, $p = .011$, between the second test and the fourth test administered after the unit of study focusing on the Civil Rights Movement, $p = .024$, and the between the second test and the fifth test which was administered after the participants created their Tri-Text picture book, $p = .011$.

Similar results were found after analyzing the Likert-Style attitude inventory responses where the participants reflected on their attitudes about writing and are presented in Table 20. As with social studies, the participants’ attitudes towards writing decreased after the first unit of study on Immigration. The initial mean from the first Likert-Style attitude inventory administered prior to beginning the first unit of study was 4.000 (SD = 1.000).

After learning through intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing during the first unit of study on Immigration, the mean score decreased to 3.682 (SD = 1.300). Further analysis of the mean scores, shows an increase of the mean score after the second unit of study which focused on Hallmark People 4.263 (SD = .806), a decrease in the mean after the third unit of study which focused on the Civil Rights Movement 4.105 (SD = 1.049), and another increase in their attitude towards writing after the final unit of study where the participants composed their own Tri-Text picture book as indicated by the mean of 4.368 (SD = .597).
Table 20

*Descriptive Data for Liking Writing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Style Test</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest for Study/Beginning of Study</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Immigration/Pretest Hallmark People</td>
<td>3.632</td>
<td>1.300</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Hallmark People/Pretest Civil Rights</td>
<td>4.263</td>
<td>.806</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Civil Rights/Pretest Tri-Text</td>
<td>4.105</td>
<td>1.049</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Tri-Text/Conclusion of Study</td>
<td>4.368</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

The descriptive data for liking writing represented a change in the mean scores over the course of the study that was considered statistically significant, suggesting a difference over time in liking writing. Since sphericity was violated, the Epsilon values were used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the overall $F$ test. Huynh-Felt results are presented in Table 21. These results show statistical significance, $F(3.180, 57.248), p = .035$.

To determine where statistical significance occurred, a post hoc test was run. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the participants’ responses after the first unit of study on Immigration and the second unit of study on Hallmark People, $p = .042$. During the second unit of study on Hallmark People, the participants first participated in creative writing in social studies as they
composed their biographical poem. There was also statistical significance between the first unit of study on Immigration and the fourth unit of study where participants participated in creative writing in social studies as they created their Tri-Text picture book, $p = .022$. The places where statistical significance was indicated may be directly related to the type of writing the participants were doing during these two units of study.

Table 21

*Analysis of Variance for Liking Writing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$MS$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>6.168</td>
<td>3.180</td>
<td>1.939</td>
<td>2.998</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>37.032</td>
<td>57.248</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.200</td>
<td>60.428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$

Throughout the study, the participants wrote in reflective journals and also wrote to make the knowledge they had learned visual. However, in the second and fourth unit of study, creative writing in the content area was also added. In the second unit of study, the participants composed a biographical poem on the Hallmark Person of their choice which was accompanied by visual representation and an informational paragraph. In the fourth and final unit of study, the participants also wrote creatively. They did so after extending on the research they conducted during the third unit of study when they researched one of the aspects of the Civil Rights Movement. During this fourth unit of study, the participants composed their own picture book which created a Tri-Text picture
book. This Tri-Text connected two picture books students had read and used for their research with their own composition. In viewing the increase in mean scores after the second and fourth unit of study, it could be concluded that participants have a more positive attitude towards writing when they write creatively in the content areas.

As presented, there was a change in the participants’ attitudes towards learning in both social studies and writing while learning through intertextually connected authentic literature and writing in the content area. Evidence for these findings was presented in both qualitative and quantitative data. The amount of support provided to the participants during each of the units of study also contributed to the participants reaching the turning point in their learning.

**Varying levels of support for success.** The fourth dimension of the turning point addresses the varying levels of support needed for success. There were times where the transition from not feeling confident in the ability to be successful to feeling confident was directly linked to the support given to the participants. The level of support required for the participants to be successful often varied from student to student. While there was not quantitative evidence that was statistically significant for the participants feeling like they could be successful in social studies and writing, there was quite a bit of evidence found in the qualitative data collected. Evidence for this finding was found for the first time in the second unit of study on Hallmark People.

It was observed that the participants’ perception of learning and their actual performance changed in accordance to the support provided to them. Throughout the study, the participants documented their thinking in their Listening Logs. In the
beginning, this was a process that was modeled for the participants using large chart paper. As the participants progressed through the first unit of study on Immigration, they were expected to assume a more active role in documenting their thinking and their learning. I still stopped at episodic moments as I had done while modeling. However, when I stopped at these points now, the expectation was that the participants would take ownership of what they were writing. In the lesson previous, I had written in my field notes, “Once students made the discovery that they could make connections to the two books I was reading and also to other books, they continued to make connections to the various texts. It was almost difficult to get them to stay focused on the texts that were being read for the day” (Field notes, September 9, 2013). However, this was pertaining to students interacting with dialogue, not with writing. Mrs. Neff and I were still recording what was being shared for students. Therefore, while some of the participants were participating actively, others took a more passive role and copied down what was being shared. They were being active copiers rather than active thinkers. These participants, upon observation, did not appear to be active but rather passive in their thinking (Field Notes, September 3, 2013). This showed when the participants had to apply what they learned by writing or creating some type of product. The participants seemed to “expect” support and would often not perform unless they had this. I learned throughout the study that this support could take many forms.

Many participants required support to perform throughout the units. This was often amplified when the participants began working on their culminating activities
which were part of each of the four units of study. An example was written about in my field notes. I wrote:

When beginning the research for their biographical poems, some students were very needy. Many students would not try to proceed in their research until I helped them. They would not “think” on their own. Even though the books were tiered to their reading levels and were books chosen themselves, they did not engage in this learning experience on their own without much prompting. (Field Notes, October 25, 2013, p. 47)

At first, this was surprising because much had been done prior to the participants engaging in this lesson. This groundwork and these supports should have led the participants to being independent in their learning and in their performance.

As previously stated, there were many participants who would not proceed without support. Many of these participants used this time to be disruptive. This disruptive behavior often seemed to be contagious. For example, I passed out the materials for the biographical poems and explained what made notes on the participants’ work that had already been done to prepare for today’s lesson. I had went through each of the participants’ research and marked responses that were correct and wrote them each notes on how they might proceed.

The participants’ acted in various ways. For some of the participants, they were able to get started right away. Their perception was that they could be successful, and they were eager to do so. However, for most of the other participants in the room, they
displayed disruptive behavior which was contagious. Diego was most representative of this. He would only continue with my support. Once he had done what I had asked him to do, he demanded additional help for the next step. This behavior was soon mimicked by Adrian and also Mia (Field Notes, October 28, 2013). The learning environment became incredibly difficult and demanding. Over and over, I observed that the participants did not having the coping skills to work their way through the tasks before them when the task was difficult. They required continued support until they reached the turning point for them to move forward.

Throughout the study, the support the participants needed varied. Whereas Diego needed constant support during the beginning of the biographical poem project, this did not continue all the way through the project. Towards the end of the project, the need for support changed drastically. Instead of needing constant direction, Diego was able to complete his project successfully by simply working next to me. I really was not providing him with any support at all except for my proximity. However, it seemed that Diego had developed enough confidence in his learning and his performance that this was enough for him to be successful (Field Notes, November 4, 2013). Upon analyzing Diego’s final project, it was found that his creation was reasonable and as indicated by the teacher, at a much higher level of proficiency than usual (see Figures 9 and 10).

Diego also remembered what he learned later, without referring to his project. He had researched Dave the Potter and wrote, “He was born in 1801. He like to build pottery. His name was Dave. He was a slave. He is a black man. He liked to work. He was writing poems” (Artifact, November 6, 2013). It was during this sharing and this
intertextual analysis that students showed a great shift in their learning and their performance.

Figure 9. Cover of Diego’s Biographical Poem
Dave

Artistic Creative

Sculpting creating working
Artist poet slave men
write work sculpt
Black man
Dave

Dave was born around 1801. Dave was an extraordinary artist who was a slave. He made wonderful pottery and he was an artist. Dave wrote a poem on each piece of pottery he created. His poems told us about his family and his life.

Figure 10. Diego’s biographical poem and informational paragraph
As the participants experienced success with varying levels of support provided to them by the classroom teacher, Mrs. Neff and myself, their attitudes towards being able to participate in social studies class changed. This was evident in both qualitative and quantitative findings. The quantitative findings are presented in Table 22. This table shows the means of the participants when responding to the statement “I feel like I am able to participate during social studies class.” As indicated by viewing the mean scores, the participants’ attitudes towards being successful at social studies decreased from 4.421 (SD = .838) as was indicated by the first Likert-style attitude inventory administered prior to the beginning the study to 4.105 (SD = 1.150) after participating in the first unit of study on Immigration.

Table 22

Descriptive Data for the Being Able to Participate in Social Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert-Style Test</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest for Study/Beginning of Study</td>
<td>4.421</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Immigration/Pretest Hallmark People</td>
<td>4.105</td>
<td>1.150</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Hallmark People/Pretest Civil Rights</td>
<td>4.368</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Civil Rights/Pretest Tri-Text</td>
<td>4.790</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Tri-Text/Conclusion of Study</td>
<td>4.737</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree
The mean then increased after participating in the second unit of study on Hallmark People to 4.368 (SD = .955). The mean increased again after learning in the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement to 4.790 (SD = .419) and remained constant with only a slight variance after composing their own Tri-Text picture book in the fourth unit of study as is indicated by the mean score of 4.737 (SD = .452).

As noted, the descriptive data for being able to participate in social studies represented a change in mean scores over the course of the study. It was determined that this change in mean scores was statistically significant by analyzing the results from a one-way repeated measures ANOVA test. These statistically significant results suggest a difference over time in the ability to participate in social studies. Sphericity was again violated so the Epsilon values were used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the overall F test. Results of the Hunyh-Feldt are presented in Table 23. These results were statistically significant, $F(2.912, 30.358), p = .021$.

To determine where the statistical significance occurred, a post hoc test was run. The results indicated statistical significance between participants’ responses twice during the course of the study. There was statistical significance between the second time the participants responded to this statement after participating in the first unit of study on Immigration and after participating in the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement, $p = .019$ and also between the participants’ responses after participating in the first unit of study and the final unit of study where they created their Tri-Text picture book, $p = .030$. 
Table 23

*Analysis of Variance for Participating in Social Studies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<td>2.912</td>
<td>2.075</td>
<td>3.583</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>30.358</td>
<td>52.414</td>
<td>.579</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.400</td>
<td>55.326</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05*

These results quantitatively reaffirmed qualitative results indicating that the participants experienced a change in the perception of being able to be successful and how this change varied with the amount of support that was provided to students. While the participants did not require as much support in the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement while creating their Share Fair poster on their two books connected to the Civil Rights Movement, many needed support while composing their Tri-Text picture book. Regardless, by providing the amount of support they needed, they began to see themselves as being able to be successful in social studies class and had a changed perception of their learning and thinking.

**Perceptions of learning and thinking.** The fifth dimension of the turning point addresses the perceptions of learning and thinking and how they varied throughout the study. Some of the participants perceived learning as “doing” rather than thinking and being successful. On more than one occasion, the participants engaged in interacting with the text by underlining what was important and writing marginal notes to document
their thinking. However, some of the participants did so without putting forth much thought. “One student underlined everything. I respectfully took his paper and gave him another with the redirection of only underlining what the most important parts of the passage were. He did the exact same thing” (Field Notes, October 16, 2013). It led me to drawing the conclusion that some of these participants really do not like to think. This was reaffirmed by Mrs. Neff who shared on several occasions that students were used to copying off of the board and were not used to thinking (Field Notes, October 16, 2013; Field Notes, October 28, 2013; Interview, December 20, 2013).

As the participants progressed through the study, they were to take a more active role in their learning. At the beginning of the study, support was given to the participants as they created their Listening Logs and used them to draw conclusions about their learning. As the participants learned, they were expected to transition into performing more independently. However, many were hesitant to do so.

In observing students, some seemed to look at me in a state of disbelief. They almost seemed to be saying “What, me? You want me to draw conclusions, make inferences, and write down facts?” As the participants began to recognize that this was indeed what I wanted them to do, they became more active in the process. I shared with the participants that this wasn’t something new. We had done this together several times before. The participants became more involved as we continued.” (Field notes, September 11, 2013).

This may have been due to the expectation from Mrs. Neff and myself that the participants would play an increasingly active role in their learning.
During one of the lessons in the first unit of study on Immigration, the participants completed their Listening Logs with guidance and support. Then, they used this information to create an intertextual graphic organizer. This practice had been modeled for the participants before. Even though the participants created their Listening Logs with hesitancy and caution, they were able to use these to successfully create their H-Map. All twenty (100%) of the participants who were engaged in this experience were able to write three similarities and two differences between the two books. (Artifact, September 11, 2013). This showed that even though the participants began the lesson with a sense of reluctance and hesitancy, they were able to participate successfully without extreme guidance and support through the process.

The participants also began to appreciate the preliminary thinking and writing they were doing as they saw results in future learning experiences. During an interview, I asked Luis how he felt about social studies and the way we had been learning in social studies class. He responded by saying, “I feel good, because when we read the book and when we wrote it, when we take notes, it would make it easier for us to do our projects and to make our immigration book and the poop book” (Interview, September 30, 2013). Luis shared his appreciation of how taking notes while reading and writing helped him be successful with future projects.

Even though there was growth evidenced in participants’ responses, again, this did not mean that this growth always continued in a way that progressed forward. There were times where the participants perceived their learning as being successful and were
motivated to continue. However, there were other times where the participants’ attitudes decreased before the increased.

Also noted was that participants assimilated being successful to having a positive attitude about their learning. This was evidenced several times throughout the study. After learning about Henry “Box” Brown, Sebastian wrote that he connected what he learned to a television show he had watched. He also shared, “I liked this unit. I am good at this unit” (Artifact, October 11, 2013).

Although the quality of writing was not part of this study, writing was used throughout the study in a variety of ways. The participants used writing every day in a variety of ways whether it was informal, while participating in a quick write to make their thinking visible, or in a formal manner while traveling through the writing process to construct a formal and published document sharing what they had learned about a topic or a person they had researched and learned about.

It was challenging to integrate writing on a consistent basis separately from the social studies time, itself. The writing block was only twenty minutes long and right before lunch. With these restrictions, we had to conduct all formal writing as part of the content areas because of lack of time. The twenty minute time period was either used to extend the social studies lesson or to have the participants engage in quick writes connected to what they were learning in their social studies class. This was connected to the participants’ perception of learning and how this changed over time.

Writing is often considered a means to make thinking visible. However, in the beginning of the study, the participants were hesitant to write. They would often sit with
blank stares on their face when asked to write. We began to use quick writes with the participants because of the time constraints and also as a beginning to have the participants make their thinking visible. The first official quick write was conducted after the participants read *Henry’s Freedom Box* and *Freedom Song*. As previously discussed, the participants were to write about connections they could make, things they wondered, and what they had learned. Although the participants were hesitant at first, they showed a sense of relief and began to write when they realized that the way to be successful in a quick write is to write (Field Notes, October 17, p. 33). It seemed that the students were afraid to write because they didn’t want to get it wrong. Once they learned that there was not necessarily a right or a wrong in this particular situation they were much more willing to put their thoughts on paper. The participants not only felt more comfortable in sharing their thoughts through the unthreatening structure of a quick write, but they were successful with this task, as well.

Because writing is a way of making thinking visible, it is also easy to see when students make a mistake in writing. The participants expressed their hesitance to participate in writing for fear of making a mistake on numerous occasions throughout the study. Not all of these had to do with writing. For example, Camila wrote about this feeling in her TABB book during the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement. The participants were to write about how they felt about their progress they were making on their Civil Rights Share Fair poster. Camila wrote, “good, because the progress was fun to do. I think about the process as good and kind of nervous and unhappy because if we make a mistake we will feel bad” (Artifact, November 20, 2013).
At various points of the study, the participants talked about how they had to think more during various learning experiences. This data has been represented qualitatively as it was found through interviews, artifacts, and observations. This was also evidenced in quantitative data when the participants responded to if they felt that they really had to think during the activities in social studies class. This data is presented in Table 24.

As indicated by Table 24, the mean decreased from 4.053 (SD = .780) which was indicative of their initial response before actually beginning the study to 4.000 (SD = 1.106) after the first unit of study on Immigration. However, after the second unit of study on Hallmark People, it increased to 4.632 (SD = .496). It decreased slightly after the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement to 4.526 (SD = .697) and decreased slightly again after the Tri-Text unit of study to 4.474 (SD = .612).

Table 24

Descriptive Data for Students Feeling Like They Have to Think during the Activities in Social Studies Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Style Test</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest for Study/Beginning of Study</td>
<td>4.053</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Immigration/Pretest Hallmark People</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>1.106</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Hallmark People/Pretest Civil Rights</td>
<td>4.632</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Civil Rights/Pretest Tri-Text</td>
<td>4.526</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Tri-Text/Conclusion of Study</td>
<td>4.474</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree
The descriptive data for having to think during social studies represented a change in mean scores over the course of the study. To determine if the findings were statistically significant, an analysis of variance was conducted. Because sphericity was violated, Huynh-Felt results were analyzed and are reported in Table 24. These results yielded statistical significance $F(2.858, 51.438), p = .012$. This statistical significance suggests a difference over time in the participants feeling that they had to think during social studies.

To determine where the statistical significance occurred, a post hoc test was run. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between participants’ responses three times throughout the course of the study. There was statistical significance between the first time the participants responded to Likert-Style attitude inventories prior to beginning the first unit of study and the third time they responded to Likert-Style attitude inventories which was after the second unit of study on Hallmark People, $p = .002$. There was also statistical significance between the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>6.379</td>
<td>2.858</td>
<td>2.957</td>
<td>4.618</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>28.021</td>
<td>51.438</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34.400</td>
<td>54.296</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$
the participants responded to Likert-Style attitude inventories and the fourth time they responded which was after the conclusion of the unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement, $p = .046$. Statistical significance was also indicated when comparing the second time the participants responded to the Likert-Style attitude inventories which occurred after the first unit of study on Immigration and the third time they responded which was after the second unit of study on Hallmark People, $p = .007$.

These qualitative and quantitative findings represent that learning is not easy and is not always fluent. Sometimes it is full of tension. However, as has been presented, once the students reach the “turning point” in their learning, they are often able to move forward and to be successful. Evidence of this was presented in the second, third, and fourth unit of study. Without this tension and this “turning point,” the participants’ responses and learning may not reach a level that is deep and substantial which was evidenced primarily during the first unit of study on Immigration. They also may not have an intrinsic motivation to learn more.

**Intrinsic Motivation to Learn More**

The third and final disposition that is addressed and was observed during the study was the intrinsic motivation to learn more. This was evidenced both within the classroom and outside of the classroom.

The participants often talked about how they expanded on their learning outside of the classroom. They did this on their own because they were interested in furthering their knowledge of what was being learned in the classroom.
Evidence for having an intrinsic motivation to learn more was not found qualitatively and quantitatively with the two types of results working together to tell a complete story. Quantitatively speaking, the participants responded to the statement, “I am interested in what I read during social studies class” in a manner that showed a change throughout the course in the study (see Table 26).

As indicated by viewing the mean scores, students’ mean scores increased from the time they first completed the Likert-style attitude inventory prior to beginning the study and after the first unit of study on Immigration. Initially, their mean score was 3.526 (SD = 1.219). After the first unit of study, it rose to 3.842 (SD = 1.259). There was a continued increase in the mean score after the second unit of study on Hallmark People. This mean score was 4.684 (SD = .478). The next two times the students completed the Likert-style attitude inventory, there was a decrease in their responses.

Table 26

*Descriptive Data for Being Interested in What Was Read in Social Studies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert-Style Test</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest for Study/Beginning of Study</td>
<td>3.526</td>
<td>1.219</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Immigration/Pretest Hallmark People</td>
<td>3.842</td>
<td>1.259</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Hallmark People/Pretest Civil Rights</td>
<td>4.684</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Civil Rights/Pretest Tri-Text</td>
<td>4.526</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Tri-Text/Conclusion of Study</td>
<td>4.105</td>
<td>1.410</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree
After the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement, the mean was 4.526 (SD = .612) and after the fourth unit of study where students wrote their Tri-Text picture book, it was 4.105 (SD = 1.410).

The descriptive data for being interested in what they read during social studies represented a change in the mean scores over the course of the study. This change was found to be statistically significant. This statistically significant difference suggests a difference over time in being interested in what was read during social studies. Again, sphericity was violated and adjusted for. Results of the Huynh-Feldt are presented in Table 27. As indicated, these results are statistically significant, $F(3.011, 54.200), p = .006$.

Table 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>$SS$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$MS$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<td>3.011</td>
<td>5.754</td>
<td>4.678</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>66.674</td>
<td>54.200</td>
<td>1.230</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84.000</td>
<td>57.211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$

To determine where statistical significance occurred, a post hoc test was run. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in the participants’ responses four times in the study. There was a statistical significance between when the participants
first completed a Likert-scale attitude inventory prior to beginning the study and when they completed Likert-scale attitude inventories the third time after the second unit of study on Hallmark People, \( p = .001 \). There was also a statistically significant difference between the first Likert-style attitude inventory and the fourth Likert-style attitude inventory completed after the third unit of study on the Civil Rights Movement, \( p = .005 \).

In addition, statistical significance was evidenced between the second time the participants completed Likert-style attitude inventories which was after the first unit of study on Immigration and the third time they completed the inventories which was after the unit on Hallmark People, \( p = .007 \). There was also a statistically significant difference between the attitude inventories completed after the unit on Immigration and the unit on the Civil Rights Movement.

All statistically significant differences were positive in nature and showed that the participants had an increased interest in what they read in social studies class. This increased interest in what the participants read in social studies class could have led to them wanting to learn more about what they were reading about. This mannerism and attitude was shared several times throughout the study. Evidence of this is presented for two of the participants as was learned while interviewing these students.

During an interview after the Civil Rights Movement unit of study, Monique shared about how she enjoyed learning and liked to do this on her own time:

R: Something I noticed with this unit is that you really did some smart thinking.

I think you have done smart thinking all along but when I look at my notes, I see that have done some smart thinking especially during this unit. It seems
that your thinking is getting more sophisticated, even smarter as you go.

M: Yes.

R: Do you have anything to share about that?

M: Actually, I just go through and read in my free time. I like to look up things and learn. I like to learn about black history, like Al Sharpton. I like to learn about Civil Rights and Jim Crow laws and all of that so you can have a more open mind. You can add your own imagination into what you do. When I am working independently, I like to add my imagination into what I am doing and to bring it together and to let it come together and see how it sounds. If it doesn’t sound right, I try to reread it another way.

(Interview, November 24, 2013)

Monique was not the only one who shared about gaining an intrinsic motivation to learn. During an interview, Fabian shared about how he watched a movie to learn more about Rosa Parks. This was learned while asking Fabian which of the three units he liked the most:

R: The first thing I want to ask you about are the three units we have learned about so far. We learned about immigration, our Hallmark People, and now the Civil Rights Movement. Out of all of those units? Which one of those did you like the most?

F: Immigration.

R: What did you like about it?

F: Cuz, they are separate. Because . . . um . . . they were all separate people, like
black and whites.

R: Oh . . . you said immigration but when we learned about blacks and whites, that was Civil Rights. So, which one did you like the best?

F: The Civil Rights.

R: You liked learning about the Civil Rights because there are separate blacks and whites. What else did you like about it?

F: ummm. . . that . . . ummmm. . . that Rosa Parks got arrested.

R: You liked learning about that?

F: Yes. I watched a movie about the story.

R: When did you do that?

F: I think it was last week. It was a Rosa Parks story.

R: Really?

F: Yes.

R: Where did you watch it at?

F: At my house.

R: That is really interesting. Was it a good movie?

F: Yes. In the bus, she sat . . . she said, “don’t touch me” in the story because the white person touched her.

R: In the movie or in the book?

F: In the movie.

R: So, did you find the movie or did someone help you find it?

F: No, I saw it. I found it myself.
R: So, you found it yourself, and you decided to watch it?
F: Yes.
R: You watched that instead of some of the other shows that you like to watch?
F: Yes, and I liked watching it.
R: Did you feel when you watched the movie that you learned even more about Rosa Parks?
F: They bullied her in the story because she got her umbrella, and the bus driver broke it.
R: Really! I didn’t know that! Did you know that?
F: No. That is why I watched it. (Interview, November 24, 2013)

Both of these participants took it upon themselves to extend their learning on their own outside of the classroom. They both talked about their excitement in learning more on their own and how they found this to be satisfying. Their actions showed that they had an intrinsic motivation to learn more, and they acted upon this motivation on their own time. Rather than watching televisions shows often watched by adolescents this age, they chose to use their time to learn more through watching a movie of historical nature and reading.

**Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings of a mixed methods study with a grounded theory focus. The findings indicated that there was an evolution of content knowledge when students experience intertextually connected authentic literature and writing in the content area classroom. It was found that the fifth grade participants gained a deeper
understanding of what they were learning in their content area classrooms through this type of instruction. The findings also indicated that the participants’ learning in the content areas was real and relevant to them when learning in this manner. The participants often times used words familiar to them, but not used during instruction, to describe what they were studying. An example that was repeated over and over again was how the participants talked about how others were “bullied” by the way they were being treated.

The findings of this study did not just pertain to the content areas. It also pertained to literacy. The participants’ literate behaviors evolved throughout the study. The participants began to employ many literate behaviors proficiently and without being prompted. In addition, the participants showed that reading real literature transforms students to being real readers. They began to ask questions, read closely, and show a value for books, authors, and illustrators.

The findings also addressed the participants’ thinking and their attitudes. Their performance and thinking showed that learning intertextually is much more than an isolated strategy or skill. It is actually a way of thinking and once this way of thinking has begun, it permeates thinking of the future. The participants were also found to have an increased positive disposition to learning. This was evidenced in many ways and is presented with both qualitative and quantitative data.

These findings are considered together in the next chapter as I discuss these findings as well as implications these findings have for the future. In addition, these
findings were utilized in developing an intertextual theory which is presented in chapter six.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

“I liked doing all of these cool things about people I don’t know. . .” – Kayla

“I thought social studies was boring. Now, when I learn about other people and how their feelings were and how they came from different countries and people made fun of them. Then I am like ya, it’s good. It’s going to be a good book. It is going to be really good in social studies this year.” – Mia

“I am excited about the stuff we have been doing and working as a team. I am looking forward to sharing what we learned on our project.” -- Talia

The participants’ comments such as these, exemplify the power of experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas. My participants demonstrated that their content knowledge evolved in a way that was unique but also their literate behaviors evolved. As shown by these comments, the participants showed a sense of pride and excitement about their learning as well as determination to work through the projects, even when they felt they were difficult, to be successful and to share their learning with others.

I begin this chapter with an overview of my study. I continue by presenting a discussion of my findings framed under four headings with discussion for each. To
follow, I present implications based off of my research findings. Next, I present limitations of the study and a conclusion.

**Overview of the Study**

This study was a mixed methods study with a grounded theory focus conducted over 18 weeks, totaling 6,650 minutes (110.83 hours) in the field. The purpose of the study was to explore intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing in the middle school content area classroom. This research was conducted through four units of study: Immigration, Hallmark People, the Civil Rights Movement, and Tri-Text Picture Books. While spending much of my time researching in a fifth grade social studies and writing classroom, I also spent time in the reading classroom. This research was conducted to explore answers to the following three questions:

1) What happens when students learn content area material while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?

2) What literate behaviors do students engage in while experiencing intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?

3) How are students’ attitudes towards reading, writing, and learning influenced while exploring intertextuality through authentic literature and writing in the content areas?

The setting of the school, Grandview Elementary, is diverse in its population and can be described as having a low socio-economic population. My specific research population consisted of twenty-two students.
I entered the field on August 26, 2013 and exited on December 20, 2013. During this time I served as both an “observer as participant” and as a “participant as observer.” The data collected varied and was both qualitative and quantitative in nature with the goal of gaining a deep and complete picture of the phenomenon I was studying.

Questionnaires, artifacts, field notes, and both student and teacher interviews were collected as qualitative data. Likert-style attitude inventories were collected as quantitative data. This data was analyzed using constant comparative analysis. Line-by-line conceptual coding was initially conducted followed by focused coding.

Data analysis revealed findings presented in six themes: evolution of content knowledge, learning in the content areas is real and relevant, the evolution of literate behaviors, real literature transforms students to being real readers, development of intertextual thinking, and dispositions. Discussion of these findings is presented under four headings as well as implications from these findings.

**Discussion of Findings**

The research findings were presented in six themes with subthemes for each. While the participants learned through four units of study in an effort to answer three research questions, the findings were presented in this manner to provide clarity in sharing these results. Upon analyzing my findings, I present my discussion in five categories: learning, thinking, reading, and writing in the content areas; the pictures matter; real and relevant learning; thinking and learning intertextually; and the turning point.
Learning, Thinking, Reading, and Writing in the Content Areas

Children’s brains are learning all of the time. They may not learn what we think we are teaching them. But they learn, if only what we try to teach them is boring, or that they are unlikely to learn what we think we are teaching. Learning is the brain continually updating its understanding of the world; we cannot stop the brain from doing this. (Smith, 1981, p. 108)

Frank Smith asserts that students are going to learn regardless of what or how a teacher teaches. It is what the student is going to learn that fluctuates. So while my participants would have learned even without experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, they learned in a manner that was unique and new to them. Findings indicated that there was an understanding that learning is about much more than memorizing and restating facts for assessment purposes. The type of learning the participants demonstrated during this study implied that learning was beneficial past the specific unit of study; it was beneficial for them as future learners, as well.

For example, while analyzing the questionnaires the participants completed after composing their biographical poem projects, some of the participants showed knowledge of what they had learned that stretched beyond the actual projects themselves. Frank Smith (1988) says that learners learn more than what we expect them to learn when they are engaged in meaningful learning experiences. This was recognized as the participants’ learning stretched beyond the expected when they experienced learning through intertextually connected authentic literature. This may indicate that when students
experience intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing that their learning becomes purposeful. It has the potential to stretch beyond what is expected as the learners become more intrinsically motivated to learn. It also suggests the potential for intertextual learning; learning that is connected, rather than isolated not only by subjects and resources, but also with thinking.

Throughout the study, the participants’ responses indicated that experiencing intertextual authentic literature and meaningful writing enhanced their learning and encouraged them to be active thinkers and active meaning makers. Most importantly they began to recognize this as was indicated in their responses. They began to understand that their thinking and learning was enhanced as they read texts that were intertextually connected. They also acknowledged that they may not understand what they were learning about as well if they only read one text. Many shared that it was actually easier to determine the “big idea” when reading intertextually connected literature because it reaffirmed their hypothesis of the big idea and then let them substantiate it by thinking of the intertextually connected texts.

Not only did the participants learn in a way that was unique in the content areas and influenced their knowledge of the content, they also began to read in a manner that showed an evolution of literate behaviors. Reading, writing, and social studies evolved from being the isolated subjects these students would have learned within, to being interconnected. They began to employ what they learned in their discipline-specific subjects to other subject areas, no matter who the teacher was. One example of this was found in how students began to read closely, for detail, and for meaning.
According to Fisher and Frey (2014), “deep understanding, and writing in response to that understanding, begins with close reading and discussion of texts” (p. 34). As the participants progressed through the study, they began to read closely and use what they read to further their learning. They didn’t do this because they were prompted to do so by their teachers. They did this naturally, in a manner that furthered their learning. For example, when Dymetrus talked about Rosa Parks and her strong chin, he used this to further substantiate how brave Rosa must have been to not give up her seat in the neutral section even though this must have been difficult. Dymetrus read closely to draw this conclusion because this detail was not emphasized by either author but was important to visualizing this important time in history. Dymetrus was also stretching beyond the notion of reading words closely, to reading pictures closely, as a mechanism to push his thinking.

The participants also began to naturally make inferences and draw conclusions. At the beginning of the study, this took great encouragement and support. Even after instruction and many examples, many of the participants had a difficult time making inferences. This was particularly true during the first unit of study on Immigration. Beginning in the second unit of study, the majority of the participants began to make inferences that were reasonable and were also natural. As they continued to experience intertextually connected authentic literature, the participants made inferences even without being asked to. Many times, I found it difficult to read a pair of books aloud without my participants stopping me to make inferences. According to Keene and Zimmerman (1997), “inferences result in the creation of personal meaning” (p. 154).
Thus as the participants made inferences naturally and regularly while reading, they were potentially creating meaning for the texts they were reading and the content they were learning.

According to Dewey, “Knowledge of methods alone will not suffice; there must be the desire, the will to employ them” (1933, p. 30). The participants of this study not only learned how experiencing intertextually connected authentic and meaningful writing furthered their knowledge and understanding, but they also began to utilize this practice on their own, independently to further their learning. Because they were taught this, practiced this, lived and experienced this, they began to apply it on their own, a practice that has potential for great advantages if continued in the future.

**The Pictures Matter**

*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.*

—Marcel Proust (1932)

The pictures in the picture books as well as their inference making aided the participants in the evolution of content knowledge. In picture books, the pictures and the texts are interdependent on one another to tell a story. There is an important interplay among the text, image, and design, and this ensemble leads to a cohesive experience (Kiefer, 1995). Sipe (1998b) talks about the interplay between the visual images and the written text as having a synergistic relationship, meaning that one enhances the other when combined. According to Serafini, (2014), “picturebooks give students the opportunity to engage in an unending process of meaning making, as every rereading
brings new ways of looking at visual, textual, and design elements” (p. 74). Therefore, when students read picture books, they are engaged in their reading, and their reading may have added meaning due to the pictures.

Using picture books for instruction is not a new concept. However, when the participants in this study experienced intertextually connected picture books, they grew to use these picture books in a way that enhanced their content area knowledge. Sternberg states “what seems to be critical is not sheer amount of experience but rather what one has been able to learn from and do with the experience” (1985, p. 307). Although Sternberg was not talking about picture books but rather vocabulary, the message applies.

The participants began to use the pictures as a support system to further their understanding; they began to view these picture books with “new eyes” that would support and further their learning. As shared in chapter four, Angel (Interview, November 10, 2013) shared how she used the picture book first when researching for her biographical poem because it helped her understand about her person and served as a foundation for her when moving to the informational text. This is an example of using a picture book to build background knowledge before moving to informational text. Doing this is not necessarily new, however the fact that Angel was doing this consciously and on her own with purpose to aid in her understanding was new and important to her.

Other participants shared about the use of pictures and how they enhanced their learning. Not only did they learn about immigration through the picture books, but the picture books “showed” what it was like for individuals throughout history. The picture books also helped the participants understand how people felt during the various time
periods. For example, the pictures helped them understand how difficult it was for people to immigrate to the United States in the mid to late 1800s. Hence, the picture books were a contributing factor to the participants viewing their learning in the content areas as real and relevant as well as responding aesthetically.

The fact that the picture books were intertextually connected reinforced that the feelings of the individuals in history were not unique to one individual shared by many. They knew that it wasn’t just Jessie from *When Jessie Came Across the Sea*, that had a difficult time. They knew this was common for many who were immigrating to the United States. These intertextual connections were important to the students’ learning and were natural while using intertextually connected authentic literature in place of singular texts or traditional texts like the textbook. With intertextually connected authentic literature, the participants could connect to the people and understand how they felt. In essence through using the pictures, the participants’ learning became real to them.

**Real and Relevant Learning**

*History is the basic facts about what happened. What did happen.*

*You don’t ask how it happened. You just ask, “What are the events?”*

(Teacher Interview, Wilson & Wineburg, 1988)

Social studies, or history, is often taught through facts and events (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg, 1991; Wineburg, 2001) and as the opening quote from a teacher interviewed by Wilson and Wineburg suggests, it is often taught with the facts as the focus. While social studies is not the only content area that this quote applies to, it is the content where the textbook is used more than any other content area (Downey &
Levstik, 1988). When learning in this way, students may feel disconnected in their learning. They may find their learning to be unreal and irrelevant to their lives (Fordham, Wellman, & Sandmann, 2002).

During the course of the study, intertextually connected authentic literature was used in place of the textbook. The participants signified their learning was real and relevant to them in many ways. They talked about what they were leaning primarily by talking about the people involved. Some participants talked about these people as if they were someone they actually knew. For example, Kayla talked about how the people in the picture books had a “sense of spirit” (Interview, November 10, 2013). She talked about this with enthusiasm which showed her excitement in learning about these women.

Learning through people rather than facts and events was also quite different than how students traditionally learn in social studies. Of course, students learn about people while they are studying social studies, but this was different. The participants of this study actually learned about social studies through people rather than through dates and events. The intertextually connected authentic literature guided their learning and supported them in making this shift. As shown by Mia at the beginning of this chapter, the participants often talked about how they enjoyed learning in this way and how their learning became more real to them. This was evidenced throughout the study but most predominately at the end of the study when the participants were asked how they connect to social studies and also how they felt about social studies. Many of the participants shared that they really enjoyed learning in social studies and also indicated how they enjoyed learning about people in social studies.
Rosenblatt (1938/1995) stresses that the reader “must draw on his past experience with life and language as the raw materials out of which to shape the new experience symbolized on the page” (p. 25). Students did just that as they were learning. Their connections were aesthetic in nature and stretched beyond mere facts. This is especially important in social studies, a subject often taught through facts. The participants connected their own lives to what they were learning. Although evidenced throughout all four units of study, it was most predominant when they were learning about immigration and the Civil Rights Movement.

During the unit on Immigration, the participants talked about how they felt bad for those who were traveling to the United States because of the difficult journey and also how it can be hard to fit in. The study was conducted with a diverse population and included several participants who they, themselves, had recently moved to the United States. They knew from experience that sometimes people move to the United States because their countries were poor or that there was war, and it was dangerous.

During the unit on the Civil Rights Movement, many of the participants used the term “bully” when responding to what they were learning and reading even though this word was not explicitly used in any of the texts or during instruction. They also talked about how they felt bad for the people during this time period, and how they did not think it was fair how they were treated and called “hateful things.”

These types of responses indicated that the participants’ learning was real and relevant, and they were responding to what they were learning. Dewey (1938) urges educators to give students the opportunity to “experience” their learning and to be sure
these experiences have potential to lead to growth. In essence, these students were “experiencing” their learning in a way that indicated that they might utilize these experiences in the future.

**Thinking and Learning Intertextually**

During the act of writing, a writer weaves a new text, while consciously or unconsciously intermingling threads from previously read or written. During the act of reading, readers weave their own texts, intermingling the words on the page with their experiences including previously read texts. Meaning emerges as readers follow threads from one to another. (King-Shaver, 2005, p. 1)

Not only did the participants begin to value experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature for their learning as discussed previously, it also became a way of thinking for them. Just as it was difficult to read a pair of texts without having the participants interrupt to make inferences, it was challenging to read texts without the participants wanting to share the intertextual connections they were making. They began to do this naturally and with enthusiasm, thus demonstrating a positive shift in their disposition.

As the study progressed, the participants made intertextual connections stretching far beyond what students had learned through the study. They shared how what they were learning and reading connected to what they had learned previously in their school career. They also made connections to the life they had today because of the actions of the individuals they learned about in social studies. This important because the
participants could see the connection between what they were learning and their own life, showing that learning in social studies was indeed important.

Not only did the participants employ intertextual thinking in their reading, they were also able to employ this type of thinking in the creation of various artifacts. They were able to do this intentionally as well as naturally. Participants created artifacts demonstrating their ability to read and write intertextually. They were able to analyze their creations and the creations of others to determine how they were connected.

The participants were given the opportunity to participate in an intertextual analysis twice during the study. The first time was after they researched a Hallmark person and composed a biographical poem and informational text on the person they chose. The participants engaged in this intertextual analysis in small groups. Each of the participants shared their compositions. After sharing, they completed a questionnaire where they wrote about how they felt the person they researched connected to another person researched (see Appendix B). The participants also had the option to choose an additional person who they felt their person connected to. Although this was not a requirement, several of the participants decided to do so. This was a step forward in students’ learning from the support and encouragement that was needed previously.

The next time the participants engaged in an intertextual analysis was at the conclusion of the study. Students had created a tri-text picture book over a three week period of time. Not only was this an opportunity for the participants to compose their own picture book demonstrating their knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement and the various types of intertextuality, it was also an opportunity for the participants to travel
through the writing process and create a formal or public piece of writing (Daniels, Zemelman, & Steineke, 2007) in their content area classroom. In this case, the content areas were social studies and writing.

The tri-text picture book connected to the two books the participants had used with their partner during the previous unit to create their Civil Rights Movement posters. While they created their poster with a partner, they composed their tri-text picture book independently and separately from their previous partner. Once they published their tri-text picture book, they met again with the person they had worked with before and shared their publication. This was an opportunity for them to share their own personally created tri-text picture book but also to read the tri-text picture book their previous partner composed. After sharing their creations, the participants completed an intertextual analysis questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Although this was a difficult task, all of the participants were able to complete the analysis successfully. To complete the analysis successfully, they had to describe the connections they could make between the book they authored, and the book their previous partner authored. They also had to share what they thought about the choices their previous partner made in their creation. Many participants were not only able to share what aspects of the books were connected but were also able to identify the method in which the author used to make these connections. They were able to share if the books were paired in a manner that was complementary, synoptic, or conflicting using these actual terms. This showed that their intertextual thinking had evolved throughout the study. There are many potential benefits in being able to think in this intertextual way.
Upon conclusion of the study, the participants wrote about how they were now able to connect to learning in social studies. Many of the participants showed natural intertextual thinking by sharing specific texts they had read and connected to as well as how they made connections to their own lives. At the conclusion of the study, Angel wrote about how she could now connect to social studies and gave examples from the first unit of study. This particular unit of study on Immigration had made an impression on Angel because she was still thinking about it and writing about it over three months later.

The Turning Point

*Failure is instructive. The person who really thinks, learns quite as much from his failures as from his successes.*

-- John Dewey

In chapter four, I present findings indicating that the participants learned in a back and forth motion. While sometimes uncomfortable, this tension was often present until they reached what I have called the turning point. Short and Burke (1991) share that this tension is not uncommon:

There is always tension in learning because the act of learning itself reminds us that knowledge is tentative. The next act of learning could be the instigator for a major overhall of our belief system. This tension is what keeps us alert, monitoring the possibilities, taking new risks, stretching ourselves and our capabilities. (p. 28)
Once they reached this point, they were able to proceed forward with confidence. Short and Burke (1991), write about tension and share that young children are driven by this tension. This was not the case with these adolescent participants. In sharp contrast, many of the participants felt a strong desire to not move forward in their learning when this tension was present often acting out and becoming disruptive.

I attribute some of this tension to students not feeling secure in their learning. I also found that many times, the participants were reluctant to respond to various questions and tasks because they did not want to make a mistake. They didn’t want to be wrong. This was especially true when the participants were asked to write. Writing was used as a way for the participants to make their thinking and their learning visible. Therefore, there was not always a right or a wrong answer. However, the participants were hesitant to engage in these types of experiences until emphasis was placed on there not being a “wrong” answer and that as long as they were writing in a manner sharing their thinking and their learning, they would be successful. The participants didn’t want to make a mistake. They had not experienced and internalized what John Dewey was talking about in the opening quote.

Several of the participants shared that when they were not confident in participating in the performance tasks they coped with this in different ways. Some talked to others in a constructive manner to help them formulate ideas. Others became off-task and disruptive. This was something I knew from conducting observations. However, I was surprised when the participants talked about and acknowledged on their
own that they were not doing what they were supposed to be doing and that they were
disruptive in their actions.

The participants’ learning throughout the study was evidenced to move back and
forth. While they gained confidence and success in the second, third, and fourth unit of
study, they reverted back to being reluctant and difficult at the beginning of each study.
At times, this was surprising to me. For example, the participants were becoming
confident in their learning during the Hallmark People unit of study. They showed this
while responding to *Henry’s Freedom Box* and *Freedom Song* and also in their writing
for *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing*. I was concerned that the writing they were
required to do for *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing* was going to be difficult, but
the participants were able to respond with confidence. Their compositions were well
written and not only exemplified an understanding of the texts but an understanding of
intertextual texts themselves. I thought for sure that the participants would be able to
continue successfully, especially when reading about a person of their choice. There was
much thought and preparation that was done prior to beginning the research for their
writing. Guidelines and organizers were created to guide them through the process (see
Appendix E), and the texts were tiered to support the participants in their various reading
abilities. I was surprised when the participants again acted in a manner showing
frustration and tension. Again, many took this as a time to become off task and to try to
pull others off task. The participants reached the “turning point” between the second and
third day of working on this project. From there, they were able to continue and with
great success. Although it cannot be concluded at what actually triggered this turn,
through observations and interviews, I learned that students needed time for thinking to percolate before they could compose.

This turning point was evidenced again for each of the units of study. It was interesting that it was generally on the second or third day of working on a project that the participants reached the “turning point” and were able to continue forward with confidence and success. Even during the last unit of study, which was academically challenging, they reached this “turning point” and were spectacular in their creations and showing what they had learned as they wrote their own tri-text picture book.

Harste, Woodard, and Burke (1984) share that “children know much more than any of us have dared to imagine” (p. 77). The participants were living proof of this during the last unit of study as they not only successfully composed a tri-text picture book but also successfully participated in an intertextual analysis comparing their creation to the other participant who composed their picture book to connect to the same pair of texts. Because of their prior difficulties when writing their biographical poem and informational paragraph, I was concerned that they would not be able to accomplish this sophisticated task. I was pleasantly pleased with their performance.

Once the participants reached this turning point and were able to move forward with confidence, they were proud of their learning and of their accomplishments. They shared this often. Some of the participants acknowledged that what they did was difficult. For example, Talia shared “It was hard, but I felt more proud of it when it was done” (Interview, November 10, 2013). While some of the participants equated success with completion such as Kayla who shared, “I feel really proud because I’m almost done.
I like it. I think it’s going to be a big success” (Artifact, November 20, 2013), other students were proud because of how difficult the project was. Luis shared this in his writing, “I think it is going to be excellent so far because we worked hard. I am thinking that our project will turn out to be good” (Artifact, November 30, 2013). Documenting students’ thinking throughout their learning process became a valuable tool for students to make their thinking visible and show how they traveled this journey which led to the “turning point” and then success.

Implications from Findings

There are many implications presented which resulted from this study. First, implications are presented as those directly related to intertextuality, authentic literature, and reading and writing in the classroom. These implications include those directly related to those individuals who are contributors or leaders in curriculum construction, teachers for when they employ instructional techniques and procedures in their classrooms, and also future researchers who research experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas. These implications are presented in a manner that may solicit consideration for others when conducting research as well as for me in my future research.

Learning and Thinking in the Content Areas

The type of thinking the participants did throughout this project as students experienced intertextually connected authentic literature and writing, and the type of thinking the Common Core State Standards is sharing students should be doing is complex; therefore, it takes time. The National Commission on Writing shares, “if
students are going to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into a language they can communicate to someone else” (2003, p. 9). They continue to emphasize the importance of writing, “If students are going to learn, they must write.” This type of thinking, with or without the writing component takes time. It is not the clear, concise thinking our students are used to. It is often “messy” before it becomes clear.

Three points for those involved in education to consider related to this concept are time, support, and resources.

**Time.** In order for students to have opportunities to experience intertextually connected authentic literature and writing, they are going to need time to do so. There are many cases where schools across America do not support the idea of giving students time to think and teachers time to teach (Daniels and Zemelman, 2004). Pacing guides, propel teachers forward to try and “cover” what is expected while failing to move the thinking and learning of their students forward, through no fault at all of their own. Time played a restricting role during this research. While it was my intention to delve into learning in intertextual ways in social studies at the beginning of the study, I also intended on researching literate behaviors when students learned in an intertextual manner through authentic literature and meaningful writing in their writing classroom. Unfortunately, there was only twenty minutes allotted for writing instruction each day and a portion of this was spent getting ready for lunch and sometimes dismissal on early
dismissal days. The way writing was incorporated into the study changed because of this constraint.

The time constraint may give teachers restricted alternatives to extending beyond the writing instruction found in many American classrooms. This writing is often dominated by short answer or fill in the blank tasks, copying from the board, and having students complete exercise of copying original writing of even a paragraph in length (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Langer & Applebee, 1987) which do not engage students in meaningful ways or require extended thinking. Having a restricted amount of time allocated for writing may reinforce this type of writing rather than the deep and meaningful writing that is so important to learning.

The time constraint may also emphasize where the importance in writing is placed. Throughout the study, students referred to what they felt was important in their writing and what they considered to actually be writing. Spelling and handwriting were discussed again and again. Providing additional time for meaningful writing instruction is just one consideration. Working to completely change the mindset of students and teachers is an even bigger step. Writing should not be thought of as being strong because it is grammatically correct and does not contain spelling errors. It also needs to be much more than short answer essays and fill in the blanks. Many of these fifth grade students indicated this was the first time they had written a book. Writing must become part of our students’ academic diet in order for students to write successfully. This is an important, conceptual shift in the way writing is viewed and taught. In order to
accomplish this feat, a change in belief systems and theoretical models with writing is due.

**Support.** The second area of consideration is support. While federal funds for education are decreased, school districts are forced to cut their budgets. This may result in a decrease of faculty and/or staff. These deductions may take away the support provided to teachers and the students while sometimes increasing class size.

Historically, the district where this research was conducted had many federally funded reading specialists. Depending on the size of the building, and the need of the building, as many as six reading specialists were assigned to one building. Academic coaches worked in many of the schools that were considered high areas of need in addition to numerous learning support teachers.

Currently, the reading specialists have been replaced with school-wide specialists. Depending on the school, these school-wide specialist may have various roles, some involving directly supporting teachers and students, some not. With increasing English language learners students in the classrooms, the need for supports in this area have increased. However, the number of support teachers, who are part of the school faculty, have actually decreased.

It often depends on the specific content area if support is given to English language learners within the classroom or if these students are removed from the classroom and taught in an alternative environment. Because social studies was not given a high priority, often times these students learned in another environment during social studies time. However, because of this study, the classroom teacher requested that the
support teacher for the English language learners come into the classroom as a support person rather than taking students out of the room.

While it was even more challenging for these English language learners because of their language barrier, the results indicate that the study was highly beneficial to those English language learners. This was even more challenging because of the decreased number of support teachers because there is often a demand for these specialized support teachers in multiple classrooms. This happened frequently which made it difficult for the English language learners to participate with success and confidence in the learning experiences. However, if the classroom teacher had not insisted that the students participating in the study stay in the room, they would have missed out on this classroom opportunity altogether.

Therefore, an area for consideration is the amount of support teachers in schools. Because we know that students learn best when stretching their thinking and their minds, and because we know that this can be uncomfortable and messy, we must provide support systems for classroom teachers and students to provide the varied support needed for active thinking and learning.

**Resources.** The third area of consideration are resources. Traditionally, American schools are arranged in an isolated manner. This isolation pertains both to curriculum and to resources. Teaching in an intertextual manner requires teachers and students to think in intertextual ways. While there are textbook companies that claim to be moving in this direction, authentic literature provides multiple opportunities for teaching, learning, and thinking in intertextual ways. The authentic literature used in
classrooms can vary to include a variety of forms to include fiction and nonfiction in the form of picture books, chapter books/novels, short stories and short passages, and poetry just to name a few. Another consideration when making a move to these types of resources is that often times the resources are interchangeable. For example, *Me. . . Jane* (McDonnell, 2011) and *The Watcher* (Winter, 2011) may be used in science class to teach scientific observation and could also be utilized in writing class to demonstrate various avenues of publishing written work. This is just one of many examples of how intertextually connected texts may be used for instruction in a meaningful and beneficial manner as well as an example of how this would promote interdisciplinary instruction rather than isolated instruction that is prevalent in many schools today. Those individuals who are charged with the responsibility of purchasing resources to be used in classrooms and buildings my consider replacing the textbook with intertextually connected authentic literature for the benefits it holds in giving students the opportunities to experience an intertextual curriculum and also for the versatility of such resources.

One component of an intertextual curriculum might be learning about social studies or history through people. There were multiple occasions where the participants demonstrated or voiced how they connected with social studies in a more meaningful manner while experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature. These types of texts have unlimited opportunities for instruction in language arts, as well.

Considering resources to support instruction that gives students the opportunities to experience the curriculum is of great value. For example, teaching the skill of making
inferences is quite different than experiencing making inferences on a consistent basis. The participants demonstrated that once they had experienced making inferences with authentic literature that it became a natural part of their thinking; it became a true literate behavior that they employed on their own. This was also true as the participants made connections. Providing resources to support this type of instruction is valuable.

Utilizing intertextually connected authentic literature paired in a variety of ways as an instructional resource may also be valuable when teaching other literacy skills such as identifying the main idea. The participants in the study commented on how they found it to be easier to determine what the main idea was when they read multiple rather than singular texts. Selecting intertextually connected authentic literature with this purpose in mind may make this type of instruction a natural part of the curriculum diet.

Also of consideration, may be the texts purchased for libraries. These libraries may vary from classroom libraries, to school libraries, to teacher libraries. Because there are so many benefits to students experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature that is connected in various ways, deliberately purchasing authentic literature with these capabilities is a natural step for classroom and school libraries. Thinking in this way may even alter how our libraries are constructed. Perhaps, arranging books to promote these kinds of connections would be of great benefit to those using the library. This may include teachers and students. Another consideration connected with libraries is creating a teacher resource room where intertextually connected authentic literature can be housed for use by all teachers.
In creating this type of resource room, it may invite educators to shift from teaching in isolated subjects to teaching in a manner that is interconnected. These resources may also provide avenues for students to experience what they are learning in an authentic manner that is real and relevant to them on a daily basis in all content areas thus suggesting a shift in how we think about curriculum and how we organize our schools.

**Teaching about Tension**

Students learn through tension. Students need to be challenged in their learning and in their thinking, and sometimes this is uncomfortable. I would challenge to say that real learning should be uncomfortable at times. Through this study, I learned that many students do not know how to work through tension. This was observed in my research site which was highly diverse and in an urban setting. I cannot conclude that this is present in all educational settings nor can I conclude that this was amplified because of the population I worked with during this study; however, I do believe that educators do not often teach students *how* to work through the tension often present in learning.

Several times during the study, my participants traveled in their learning and reached a “turning point,” a point in their learning where they gained confidence in their learning and were able to move forward with success. Often times, these experiences were discussed several months after they occurred, indicating that learning through this tension had a lasting impression on the participants and one that was positive as they discussed their pride in their thinking and learning.
Before reaching this turning point, many of the participants shared that they often acted out and became off task because they were frustrated. The tension they were feeling began to take over which created a disruptive and challenging environment not only for them, but for others around them. It also provided a challenge and obstacle to the teachers in the room.

As stated previously, my participants were not taught how to work through tension. This was not the focus of the study nor was it discovered early on in the study. Although modeling and scaffolding were used throughout each unit as an instructional tool, these were not designed to teach students about how they might work through these tensions. While, the modeling and scaffolding gave students an example of how their thinking might look and might evolve, specifically addressing and researching the tensions students feel and how they can overcome these tensions to learn may be of great value, particularly in urban classrooms.

One of the participants evolved from not completing any of the learning experiences for an entire first unit of study to completing the majority of the learning experiences in the second unit of study and all of the learning experiences for the third and fourth unit of studies. As discussed, this was prevalent for several of the participants. I learned that the participants would reach a “turning point” in their learning. Once reached, they began to learn with much more ease, success, and pride.

It would be interesting to further investigate what might happen if we taught students coping mechanisms and what to do when they feel this tension in their learning. Would possessing these coping mechanisms help further their learning? Would this aid
to building a community of learners that works together to be successful? Would this education help students in a way that might lead to less tumultuous learning environments for students?

**Teaching Beyond the Test: Stretching Students’ Thinking**

Consistently through this study, I found when my participants’ thinking was challenged to a high degree, they were able to increase the thinking they could do independently. This reinforces the notion of engaging students in social constructivist learning at high levels. If students are engaged in this type of learning and this type of thinking, they can then tend to other tasks much more successfully.

Traditionally, it seems that teachers have taught with the goal of students performing well on high stakes tests and often assess this learning with materials structured in much of the same way as these tests are structured. I am suggesting that teachers actually teach beyond the test.

While researching, it was found that when the participants’ thinking was challenged and stretched, they could then come back to other tasks and perform them successfully and confidently. It also seemed throughout the study that as the participants gained confidence in their learning, there was less tension in performing tasks that were difficult than originally. Therefore, designing a curriculum that challenges students beyond what is expected may guide students to teaching students in a manner that they do meet expectations and remarkably well.

In addition, designing a curriculum that engages students in varying levels of learning experiences would be of great value. Rather than beginning with simplistic
learning experiences at the beginning of the school year and increasing the level of task complexity as the school year progresses, I am suggesting alternating these experiences. The results indicated that students experienced the turning point in a “back and forth” type of way. Be intentionally designing curriculum in this manner, students would have an opportunity to learn with varying levels of experiences. It would also provide educators multiple opportunities to teach students how to work through tension and be successful in their learning.

**Future Writing Research**

Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) share that writing needs to be returned to its place as one of the basics of education. This takes time and also takes a change in thinking. Educators responding to this call may want to consider the resources they are using for instruction to help them do so. Rather than using traditional English writing textbooks, using authentic literature and real-world examples may be of great value. To do this, it will take consistency not only in the isolated grade levels and subject areas in which educators often live, but also across subject areas and across grade levels. After all, to change a mindset, it takes time and effort by many.

This was evident throughout this study. Even though the participants in this study had written in many ways including pieces that were short and composed in a single sitting as well as substantial pieces written over an extended period of time, not all students had changed their thinking of what was considered “good” writing. Conversations of correct spelling and punctuation still arose. The amount of time devoted to writing in this educational setting as well as many others, actually supported
rather than refuted this type of value. With only twenty minutes a day devoted to writing instruction, teaching meaningful writing was an obstacle.

Researching this phenomenon specifically is an area to consider for future research. In addition, making writing a daily part of the curriculum in all subjects is a notion worth considering and implementing in the future. While these teachers had 75 minutes a day for content area instruction, they only had twenty minutes a day for writing instruction. Although the teachers were expected to integrate writing into their content area, only the writing teacher was responsible for communicating students’ writing performance. Thus, the pressure came down on this teacher to teach writing in an effective manner with a mere twenty minutes a day. This was true for the reading teacher, the science/social studies teacher, and the math teacher.

In addition, even though content area teachers could incorporate writing into their specific disciplines, they would do so with a different purpose. Their purpose would be to teach the writing of a scientist, a historian, a mathematician. This is valuable as writing is a tool that deepens students’ understanding of what they are learning in their content area subject. However, a science, social studies, or math teacher on their own cannot be expected to teach the craft of writing, and we certainly do not want to send the message that it is acceptable for students to write without proficiency in the subject areas or that when you write in the subject areas, it is perfectly acceptable to not write well. This supports the notion of interdisciplinary instruction rather than disciplinary instruction which is advocated by many and supported with the Common Core State Standards.
To do the art of teaching writing justice, this instruction must encompass both elements. First, writing should be integrated into each subject area. The research presented illustrates how employing write-to-learn activities in the content areas as well as public writing and creative writing in the content areas has multiple benefits. However, it is also needed for meaningful writing to become a more integral part of our daily curriculum, a notion also supported by the Common Core State Standards. Interdisciplinary instruction is one consideration to integrating writing into the content areas while also addressing the craft of writing. Making room in the curriculum for meaningful writing opportunities is also another important consideration.

Also pertaining to writing is the consideration for the lack of research specifically relating to paired text as an instructional tool for writing. While teachers have used mentor texts in the classroom for many years with success, research on using paired texts as mentor texts for instruction has not been explored in great detail. Although paired texts as mentor texts were used, this study did not provide this avenue for several reasons. First, because of the structure of the curriculum in place, there was not ample time to integrate teaching the craft of writing through paired text in all of the units of study. This was a focus in the fourth unit of study when students created their tri-text picture books. However, substantial data was not collected addressing this concept. Making this a focus for future research may have great value to the field and is a practice I hope to research in the future.
Intertextual Thinking

It has been discussed that American schools are arranged in isolated subject areas. To magnify this, disciplinary literacy suggests that teachers of specific disciplines should teach their students specific literacy skills that are applicable to their specific subject area.

Intertextuality challenges this notion because it is not a simple technique that can be learned as a simple, isolated strategy, only to be used in a specific subject. Nor is it a practice that is used differently in social studies, differently in science, and differently when reading and writing. In contrast, intertextuality is a way of thinking, and this way of thinking permeates all subject areas.

Therefore creating learning experiences with authentic literature that is deliberately presented in an intertextually connected manner is of great value. Utilizing complimentary connected texts, synoptic texts, conflicting texts, and controlling texts throughout the curriculum and in all subject areas has great potential to further students’ learning of content knowledge, their literature behaviors, and their attitudes to learning. This invites those who have the position of selecting curricular materials, to consider authentic literature as a resource for instruction. However, the resources and materials utilized, to include authentic literature, must be more than having qualities of being high quality and/or award winning. It should also be literature deliberately and intertextually connected in a variety of ways because it is when this is done that students’ learning, thinking, and understanding is enhanced the most.

Richard Allington shared in a presentation at the Florida Reading Association meeting in Orlando, Florida (2000) that none of the exemplary teachers he studied were
tied to commercial materials. The exemplary teachers taught children while typical teachers taught programs. This notion can be applied when thinking of a curriculum that embraces experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas.

It is important to do not just create another “canned” program full of intertextually connected authentic literature for teachers to use for instruction. This type of program would not support the thinking that is so important. It would become just another educational recipe that may end in a product of disaster.

Instead, providing educational opportunities to teach teachers about thinking intertextually is of great importance. Thinking intertextually becomes a natural way of thinking but only after this type of thinking has been experienced and has been learned. This applies to both teachers and to students. In order to encourage teachers to teach in intertextual ways, they must first experience this type of thinking themselves. This calls for professional development to explore this type of thinking and the many alternatives to consider when employing this type of instruction in classrooms.

This should not be singular, isolated professional development that takes place one day and is then forgotten. Revisiting this notion will have great benefits. In addition, encouraging teachers to network together also has valuable benefits. There is an unending amount of high-quality, award winning authentic literature that students may experience intertextually. Networking together will expand teachers’ knowledge of the resources available to them. Through networking, teachers may also share the texts they have found that were particularly powerful as well as successes they experience with
their students and challenges, as well. With this type of professional development, teachers may grow together as their own community of learners. To begin this type of thinking, an intertextual theory for educators has been created based on the results of this study. This theory is presented and discussed in chapter six.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to my study. First, I felt that researching in a manner where I was a “participant as observer” was a limitation at times. While there is value in becoming one with the research site, this role makes it challenging to document everything observed and learned while providing instruction. There were limited occasions where I was able to assume the “observer as participant” role; however, it would have been valuable for these opportunities to be more plentiful.

Time was also a limitation in the study. This played a part in many ways. Because of the magnitude of data collected, I was not always able to analyze my data to form future research. I found myself asking while writing about my findings, “Why did they think this?” or “What did they do next?” As a researcher, it would have been beneficial to have more opportunities to conduct data analysis in a manner that supported future decisions.

Interviews played an important part in research findings. As previously explained, the setting and timing of conducting these interviews was challenging. This may also have been a limitation because more interviews may have been conducted without these limitations.
Conclusion

Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours.

-- John Locke

John Locke’s words share how reading furnishes the mind with materials of knowledge and the addition of thinking is what guides students to gaining ownership of what they read. I would challenge to say that this also guides students to gaining ownership of what they learn and is one step closer to teaching students in a manner that will stretch beyond what they learn in isolated subject areas.

Gallagher (2009) advises us to “never lose sight that our highest priority is to raise students who become lifelong readers” (p. 117). I would like to extend this notion to raising students who are lifelong learners and lifelong thinkers; this should be our greatest mission. Experiencing intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing in the content areas may be a path worth traveling in becoming passionate about learning and therefore, a lifelong learner. A learner who thinks in intertextual ways not only furthers their learning but also may develop a passion for learning and while “passions are peculiar” (Kittle, 2013, p. 19), they are a driving force to furthering students’ reading, writing, thinking, and learning not only today for many years to come.
CHAPTER VI

A THEORETICAL MODEL OF INTERTEXTUALITY

*Knowledge formed provides vicarious experience.*

--Lincoln & Guba

The purpose of this chapter is to present a theoretical model of intertextuality. This chapter begins with a brief introduction of intertextuality as well as the three factors that contributed to formulating a theoretical model of intertextuality. Next, a theoretical model of intertextuality is presented and explained with the purpose of demonstrating the influence of teaching and learning in an intertextual manner. The chapter continues with a discussion on considerations in implementing the intertextual model. A conclusion is provided to conclude the chapter.

**Introduction**

American classrooms, at all levels, are often arranged in isolation. This includes isolated subject areas taught with isolated textual materials (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996) in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. According to Short, “research indicates that although students can and do make intertextual links, the linking is not pervasive in school or encouraged in practice” (Short, 2004, p. 376). When texts are used in isolation, they are actually treated as distinct entities. According to Beach, Appleman, and Dorsey (1990), “treating texts as distinct entities assumes that readers
understand texts in a conceptual vacuum” (p. 225). In contrast, intertextuality suggests that “readers understand texts as extensions of their previous experience” (Beach, et al., 1990, p. 225).

The word *intertextuality* comes from the Latin word *intertexto* which means “to weave together” (King-Shaver, 2005, p. 1). Thus the concept of intertextuality is that no text stands completely on its own, every text is interwoven with other texts, whether it be by words, illustrations, or various forms of media. Meaning of the text emerges as the reader follow one thread of the text to another (King Shaver, 2005).

A theoretical model of intertextuality has been formulated while considering three contributing factors. The first contributing factor is based on the results of a mixed methods study with a grounded theory focus conducted over an 18 week period of time, totaling 6,650 minutes (110.83 hours) in the field. While intertextual connections can be made using semiotic text involving the use of media, film, this study focused on linguistic text which is text of the written word (Hartman & Allison, 1996). The purpose of the study was to explore what would happen when students experienced intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing in the middle school content area classroom. While there is research in the field that focuses on discourse, linguistics, and semiotics, this research took the stance of exploring the phenomenon with a lens on thinking.

The second contributing factor relies on practices in the field of education not only relating to intertextuality but also content area literacy. While analyzing a historical analysis of instruction in middle school content area classrooms, presented in chapter
two, seven themes were evident in the literature: disciplinary literacy, vocabulary and word study, strategy instruction, authentic literature in the content areas, reading formats, technology, and students with special needs. Content area literacy, with a focus on strategy instruction, and disciplinary literacy were focused upon while formulating this theory because the research conducted focused on instruction in the content areas and because this research posits that both content area literacy and disciplinary literacy are important to instruction.

Strategy instruction was first introduced in the early 1900s to help students be independent learners and to help them study effectively (McMurry, 1909). The eight facts essential in studying successfully claimed by McMurry are evident in many of the reading strategies developed. While the use of reading strategies is beneficial in reading, Schoenbach, Greenleaf, and Hale (2010) caution that using strategies for reading instruction is more complex than teaching a set of isolated generic reading comprehension strategies such as summarizing or questioning even though they have been found to be effective. The premise of strategy instruction is that the strategy is modeled for students, the students practice the strategy with support from the teacher, and then the strategy is used later, independently, to support the student in their reading. This framework follows Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (1978). Of course, some strategies are more applicable for specific subject areas, specific texts, and with specific purposes but the notion of strategy-based instruction is that the reading strategies can be utilized across the content areas.
Disciplinary literacy, a newer notion, takes the stance that different subject area texts are written in different formats and hence, require different ways of reading and explicit instruction should be provided to teach students how to read accordingly (Wilson, 2008). This instruction should be through the specific content area teacher rather than the literacy teacher because it is this content area teacher who is most knowledgeable about their content. Snow and Moje (2010) articulate that generic strategy instruction may be helpful to a student throughout the day, but they are not sufficient in supporting a learner to be successful in specific subject areas such as math, science, and social studies. Learners must use the habits read, write, and think with specific discipline values (McConachie, et al., 2006; Tovani, 2004).

The purpose of the theoretical model of intertextuality is not to discredit either strategy instruction, often found in content area classrooms, or disciplinary literacy; there are a place for both in curriculum. The theoretical model of intertextuality can actually be situated between the two. This is because learning in an intertextual manner is different than strategy instruction that often occurs in a short period of time with the intention of students applying the concept on their own independently. It is also different from disciplinary literacy where literacy is taught differently depending on the discipline it is being taught in. While teachers may take on a disciplinary lens while teaching intertextually using resources specific to the specific discipline, the actual process of teaching in an intertextual manner does not deviate depending on the subject area: math, science, social studies, reading, or writing. Rather the actual process remains the same while the resources may be different depending on the subject area. For the purpose of
this study and this theoretical model, authentic literature is being considered as the literacy source.

The third contributing factor relies on previous research on intertextuality and the work of theorists and authors in the field. Although not the first to study intertextuality, Julia Kristeva, a semiotician and psychoanalyst, coined the term intertextuality in the late 1960s to refer to the ways written and visual texts are related as well as experiential texts of one’s own life are connected (Allen, 2011).

Several researchers and theorists believe that intertextuality is practiced through discourse and is social in nature (Bakhtin, 1984, 1986; Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Bloome, Puro, & Theodorous, 1989; Fairclough, 1992; Hartman, 1995; Kristeva, 1980; Lemke, 1992; Short, 1992). In this context, multiple voices in discourse as well as in literature interact to create planes of meaning (Kristeva, 1980). Thus, communication becomes the means for making meaning and all forms of communication work together to create meaning in a very social manner, rather than standing on their own.

Other researchers and theorists discuss intertextuality in the context of connecting linguistic materials such as written text with semiotic materials such as television programs, movies, videos, and other cultural products (Hartman & Hartman, 1993; Many & Anderson, 1992; Sipe, 1996, 1998a, 2000). When Many and Anderson (1992) studied written responses of fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students who had written realistic short stories, they found that there were more intertextual connections to television shows more than there were to texts. Thinking of intertextuality in this manner is another way of making intertextual connections beyond written texts.
Studying and writing about learners making intertextual connections through a textual stance entails learning to infer while making intertextual links between previous knowledge, current texts, and previously read texts (Cairney, 1990; 1992; Chi, 2012; King-Shaver, 2005; Lenski, 1998; Hartman, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1978; Short, 2004). From this stance, no text stands in isolation. Reading one text should invite the reader to consider previously read texts as well as what the reader has learned previously.

Connecting to this notion are researchers and authors who recognize the value of creating a classroom environment that gives learners an opportunity to bring multiple texts together to enhance their learning and their meaning making (Bloome, 2003; Camp, 2000, 2006; Code & Runge-Pulte, 2007; Frye, Trathen, & Wilson, 2009; Furtado & Johnson, 2010; Heisey & Kucan, 2010; Oyler & Barry, 1996). Bloome discusses this notion after visiting students where an intertextual study was being conducted. He shares, “Meaning was located not in one book or text, but in the bringing together of multiple texts” (2003, p. 13). This type of instruction invites teachers to create an environment where multiple books are available for students to further their learning and their thinking.

Still others share how researchers have studied intertextuality in the area of writing (Dyson, 1997) and writing and literature (Cairney, 1990, 1992; Many & Anderson, 1992; Saunders, 1997). Much of this research was conducted on how students used text while creating their own compositions and what the influence of writing in this manner was. While the studies of Dyson (1997) and Many and Anderson (1992) were based on writing, they both found that students made connections to television shows and
other forms of popular culture more than they made connections to other texts to aid in their writing. Many theorists and researchers have explored intertextuality through a variety of venues in the past, and even have combined venues such as reading, writing, and social construction (Beach, Appleman, & Dorsey, 1990; Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). Research has found that students learning is enhanced when they learn in an intertextual manner. Research has also shown that these intertextual connections can take many forms.

This theoretical model of intertextuality honors these many ways of making connections but also challenges educators, administrators, and policy makers to consider that intertextuality is more than learning through connected discourse. It is also more than connecting texts to conversation, written texts to semiotic texts, texts to texts, and student compositions to texts.

The way this theoretical model of intertextuality differs than the research conducted previously is that it posits that intertextuality, is a way of thinking. Once embraced, this way of thinking permeates all that the reader or learner does and thinks. It is through the intertextual thinking process that readers become active meaning makers. This active meaning making may be evident in all subject areas and in a variety of formats.

A Theoretical Model of Intertextuality

According to Rosenblatt (1994), “a theoretical model by definition is an abstraction, or a generalized pattern devised in order to think about a subject” (p. 1057).
We rely on models when we learn anything (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011). A theoretical model of intertextuality (see Figure 11) is presented with the intention of suggesting a process of creating an intertextual curriculum for intertextual instruction, within and across content area subjects. This theoretical model was created with Kenneth Goodman’s whole language model (1989) in mind as can been seen by its circular construction, as well as the back and forth design.

Figure 11. Theoretical Model of Intertextuality
This model was created as a result of an 18 week mixed methods study, “Experiencing Intertextuality through Authentic Literature and Meaningful Writing in Middle School Content Area Classrooms.” This study indicated that when students learn in an intertextual manner, there is an evolution of content area knowledge, students learning in the content areas is real and relevant, there is an evolution of literate behaviors, students transform into being real readers through reading real literature, there is a change in dispositions, and students utilize intertextual thinking in their learning. These findings were considered, are evident in the model, and are discussed within the explanation of the theoretical model.

The model is presented in Figure 11 and then described beginning with the center of the model and then working to the outside. While the characteristics of the model may move back and forth in their importance, it is important to note that the intertextual curriculum should always be in the center of the model.

**The Intertextual Curriculum**

In the center of the theoretical model are the words “The Intertextual Curriculum.” These words have been used because findings from the study, indicated that intertextuality should be recognized and applied in all subject areas and is enhanced when learning in a way that is interconnected and interdisciplinary in nature. Therefore, these words are placed in the center because intertextuality should be the center of all planning, instruction, and assessment in all content areas.

Once educators begin to think in an intertextual manner, it permeates all thinking. Hence, learning experiences and the instructional resources used for these learning
experiences should not be thought of as separate entities but rather as intertextually connected experiences and the tools needed for these intertextually connected experiences. By viewing the theoretical model of intertextuality, this can be seen by the wedge, cutting across the model. This shows how relevant, intertextually connected authentic literature is directly connected to the intertextual curriculum and cuts across all other components of the model.

**Development of Intertextual Thinking and Dispositions**

The circle surrounding the intertextual curriculum addresses the development of intertextual thinking as well as dispositions and how these dispositions can be “a way of thinking.” These have been deliberately placed next to the intertextual curriculum because they are critical components in creating an intertextual curriculum.

It may seem like common sense that if students learn through a curriculum boasting of intertextuality they would begin thinking intertextually. However, this theory takes the stance that while students’ thinking will evolve to thinking in an intertextual manner, it needs to be taught and planned for. Students have been conditioned to learn in an isolated manner which encourages isolated thinking. Using direct attention to teach the various types of intertextual connections and the importance of making these intertextual connections will lend to students; intertextual thinking developing to a greater degree.

Research has been conducted to indicate that there are benefits of connecting texts. These results indicate an increase in background knowledge (Code & Runge-Pulte, 2007; Soalt, 2005; Taliaferro, 2009; Villano, 2005); an increase in comprehension
(Alvermann & Wilson, 2011; Frye, Trathen, & Wilson, 2009; Lenski, 1998; Soalt, 2005; Villano, 2005); the promotion of thinking critically (Giorgis & Johnson, 2002; Hynd, 1999; Hynd, 2002; Walker & Bean, 2002); enhanced classroom conversations and meaningful learning (Short, 1991, 2004; Taliaferro, 2009); increased student interest, engagement, and motivation (Barone, 2011; Camp, 2000; Camp, 2006; Frye, et al, 2009; Soalt, 2005; Stix & Hrbek, 2001).

This intertextual theory was formulated on findings from “Experiencing Intertextuality through Authentic Literature and Meaningful Writing in Middle School Content Area Classrooms.” This research suggests that the benefits of connecting texts deliberately and in a variety of ways leads to students gaining an intimate understanding of the content as well as other positive attributes than when connecting texts by chance or in one way.

Hartman and Allison (1996) suggest five ways of connecting texts: complementary texts, synoptic texts, conflicting texts, controlling texts, and dialogic texts. The first four of these intertextually connected text types were utilized in the 18 week study. This theoretical model was created with the varying types of intertextually connected texts in mind. However, I have formulated terms to describe the types of connections I am suggesting teachers utilize in their instruction.

These different types of connections vary in difficulty. This variance may depend on the actual books being used. When students know how texts are connected, they can tailor their thinking in a manner that will aid in them being successful at deconstructing the texts for meaning. Thinking metacognitively and recognizing what types of texts may
be difficult, will help students know what type of thinking they must do to comprehend what they are reading.

Once students begin to consciously think in this manner, they will continue to think in this way naturally. Although many theorists discuss intertextuality in a natural manner because no singular text stands on its own, this type of thinking is enhanced when students learn to make connections across texts in an explicit manner first. It is then that thinking intertextually becomes a natural way of thinking that truly enhances students learning.

Students who learn through an intertextual curriculum often experience a change in disposition. This is not to say learning in this manner transforms students’ learning in a more positive manner. Actually according to the research conducted, this is more of a back and forth journey. Students travel recursively, back and forth, from feeling tension, insecurity, and sometimes frustration in their learning to feeling successful and proud. What is important to note is that this type of curriculum provides educators with an avenue to teach students how to work through tension to become successful in their learning.

Tension is always present in learning because learning itself should remind learners that knowledge is tentative (Short & Burke, 1991). Knowledge should not be stagnant and should always be built upon. Short and Burke continue to discuss how tension keeps learners alert as they monitor possibilities, take new risks, and stretch themselves and their capabilities. Tension can be viewed as a positive force, giving the learner intellectual life.
The research conducted during the 18 week mixed methods study indicated that as students obtained success in learning experiences while traveling from insecurity and frustration, their confidence level increased and was used to be successful in future learning experiences. It has been noted that students are able to calmly participate in challenging learning experiences where previously they often displayed inappropriate mannerisms when they felt tension in their learning. Therefore, students are likely to have positive perceptions of their thinking and learning as well as an intrinsic motivation to learn.

**The Evolution of Literate Behaviors and “Real Readers”**

Doug Fisher takes the familiar saying of practice makes perfect to say practice makes permanent (Frey & Fisher, 2013). While Fisher is referring to assigning homework, the message is applicable many places throughout the curriculum. One of these is following multi-step directions. This is a task required throughout students’ learning and throughout students’ life. However, it is a practice that students often struggle with. When learning in an intertextual curriculum, there are more natural and meaningful situations where students can engage in following multi-step directions and therefore, become proficient and utilize the skill on their own in the future. This is not the only practice that students may employ on their own in the future after engaging in an intertextual curriculum. Students may also build their vocabulary on their own.

In many classrooms, vocabulary is taught in the same type of cycle. The students receive a list of words on Monday, they are told to look up the words in a dictionary or are given the definitions for the words, they may be required to put the words in
sentences, and they are tested on the words on Friday. By the end of the day on Friday, many of the students have already forgotten the words they were just tested on, and on Monday, the cycle begins again (Greenwood, 2004). The chance for students to own and use vocabulary words in their own lives is greater if they actually interact with the vocabulary words and identify with them (Allen, 1999; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Wilfong, 2013). Bintz (2011) suggests that students may learn vocabulary best in an interdisciplinary manner. Teaching vocabulary through an intertextual curriculum is a perfect avenue for interdisciplinary vocabulary instruction. Frank Smith shares that vocabulary learning never stops (1999); however, this learning can be enhanced when students interact with words that are meaningful to them. An intertextual curriculum with intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing is path worth traveling to build students’ vocabulary in a meaningful way.

While encouraging students to learn vocabulary in a meaningful way is of great importance so is the encouragement of students making inferences and drawing conclusions in a natural way. According to Keene and Zimmerman (1997), an “inference is a mosaic, a dazzling constellation of thinking processes” (p. 154). To make an inference, the reader must combine the words on the page with their own personal experiences and knowledge. As Keene and Zimmerman share, “inferences result in the creation of personal meaning” (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 154). When students learn through an intertextual curriculum with intertextually connected authentic literature and meaningful writing, the opportunities for students to make natural and meaningful inferences is great. Through intertextual instruction, readers experience inference
making. Making inferences while reading that then occurs naturally and is just one of the many reading habits that may be encouraged through reading intertextually connected literature. Questioning is also of great importance.

Readers who read actively naturally form questions while reading. This is a way to push their thinking. When students experience an intertextual curriculum with intertextually connected texts, there are many opportunities to ask meaningful questions to satisfy their curiosity. According to Burke, “questions are the Swiss Army knife of an active, disciplined mind trying to understand texts or concepts and communicate that understanding to others” (2010, p. 3). Connecting texts in a variety of ways, which will be described in the following section, is one way of stimulating natural curiosity. This natural curiosity does not only pertain to questioning, it also applies to readers reading closely and for detail.

Avid readers read closely and for detail. This type of reading may be enhanced when students learn with intertextually connected text. According to Lehman and Roberts (2014), “when we invite students to read in this way, they too begin to see how these connections between texts can guide them toward new interpretations and realizations. And this, in turn, can lead them to see the connections to be made across our culture, our world, and our lives” (p. 99). Therefore, learning with intertextually connected authentic literature, naturally encourages readers to read closely, to construct their own meaning just as real readers do.
Evolution of Content Knowledge and “Real” Learning

When implementing this type of curriculum in the content areas, it has been found that there is an evolution of content knowledge. Through this evolution of content knowledge, students’ responses may evolve from being reasonable but at the surface level to being substantial and detailed in nature.

Tovani shares that “connecting can repair confusion” (2000, p. 74) so when students cite textual evidence for their responses, they are more likely to communicate a clear and reasonable response. When learning through an intertextual curriculum, students may begin to cite evidence on their own to substantiate their responses and ensure they are reasonable. Just as with aesthetic responses, this has great potential for pushing their learning to a deeper, enhanced level.

When students learn through an intertextual curriculum, they have great potential for their learning to be enhanced through the use of intertextually connected texts. This type of curriculum also promotes the evolution of interdisciplinary content knowledge; knowledge stretching across the disciplines. In addition, the learners may come to recognize that their learning is enhanced by reading more than one piece of text. For example, in the study, “Experiencing Intertextuality through Authentic Literature and Meaningful Writing in Middle School Content Area Classrooms,” the students recognized that reading the first text often times laid a solid foundation for their learning. They also recognized that their learning was enhanced when additional texts were read in an intertextual manner.
When learning through an intertextual curriculum, learning in the content areas may become real and relevant for students. Rosenblatt (1978) defines two modes of reading, efferent reading and aesthetic reading. One way students may show that their learning in the content areas is real and relevant is through the types of responses they offer. Learning in a real and relevant manner may be demonstrated by students altering their responses from being efferent, textual/factual responses to aesthetic in nature. To respond aesthetically, the learner must connect what they are learning to what they already know or what they have already experienced (Rosenblatt, 1978) thus bringing their learning to a deeper level. According to Atwell, “We read aesthetically for its own sake, for the pleasures and rewards of living vicariously inside someone else’s literary world” (2007, p. 55). So while students often respond in an efferent manner when learning from singular, isolated texts, their responses are more likely to be aesthetic in nature when learning intertextually.

Connecting with students responding in an aesthetic manner is a demonstration of having an intimate understanding of the content they are studying. This may be seen when students talk about historical figures and their feelings or how it may have felt to live through a historical event such as immigration or the Civil Rights Movement. With these types of responses, students respond as if they are actually a living part of history, as if they are actually part of the time period being studied.

**Implementation of the Intertextual Model**

While previously formulated theories and previously conducted research have centered on the notion of no utterance being voiced on its own, no text being read without
thinking about previously read texts or lived experiences, and no writing being composed without the thought of reading previous writing, this theoretical model posits intentional selection of curriculum materials that are intertextually connected in a variety of ways to enhance students’ thinking in intertextual ways and hence, enhancing their learning.

This is much different than what is traditionally evidenced in classrooms in the United States where instruction often focuses on a single text (Wolf, 1988). It is also different than previous theories or practices because this theoretical model suggests intertextuality as a way of thinking. There are several ideas that educators, administrators, and policy makers may find fruitful to consider when planning an intertextual curriculum.

**Intertextually Connected Resources**

According to Hartman and Allison (1996), “A text does not have to be confined to the boundaries of a printed page” (p. 111). As previously stated, the word texts may range from linguistic texts which include texts written materials such as articles, stories, poems and essays. The word text may also include semiotic texts such as videos, movies, drama, dance, music photography, gestures, oral language, painting, as well as a variety of other sign systems (Hartman & Allison, 1996). In this sense, while selecting intertextually connected resources, various forms of texts may be considered.

Educators often think of intertextually connected texts as paired texts or twin texts (Camp, 2000, 2006; Code & Runge-Pulte, 2007). Traditionally, this entails pairing a piece of fiction with a piece of nonfiction. Based on previously conducted research, it is recommended to pair books in a wide variety of ways. This includes the type of text as
well as the way texts are paired. Hartman and Allison (1996) suggest five ways to connect texts intertextually. Four of these five were utilized during the study: complementary texts, synoptic texts, conflicting texts, and controlling texts. These terms were considered when formulating four terms and models for consideration when developing an intertextual curriculum.

**Corresponding texts.** Corresponding texts (see Figure 12) are connected by theme with the purpose of enhancing and supporting this theme. They give learners an opportunity to see the nature of the topic through multiple perspectives. Examples of corresponding texts are books paired to teach about number sense, segregation, figurative language, or the scientific method.

![Figure 12. Corresponding Texts](image)

**Companion texts.** Companion texts (see Figure 13) are connected in a way that highlights variations or versions of a single story or event. The purpose in using these types of texts is to provide learners with the opportunity to see how a story is illustrated through different lenses. An example of companion texts are variations of specific fairy tales, told from different countries. Other examples might be texts connected to teach
about multiplication, the discovery of America, or the life of Snowflake Bentley, a scientist.

Contradictory texts. Contradictory texts (see Figure 14) are connected in a way that provide multiple perspectives on a specific topic. These texts may invite the reader to consider perspectives that oppose one another because they share facts or events that are contradictory. For example, readers may have the opportunity of reading books portraying where Rosa Parks actually sat on the bus. Did she sit in the front which is taught so often in schools in America or did she sit in the neutral section? These types of texts often stimulate students’ curiosity as they are naturally interested in learning the truth.

Cluster texts. Cluster texts (see Figure 15) provide learners with the opportunity of learning about a topic in a deep and meaningful manner. One text is chosen to serve as the way-in text, or the book that is the center of instruction. Additional texts are chosen
that connect, or surround, the way-in text. There are many opportunities for these intertextually connected materials. For example, a way-in text might be a book about Amelia Earhart. The books that surround it may be other noteworthy female pilots from different points of history and might include Maggie Gee, Bessie Coleman, and Harriet Quimby. Cluster texts might also center on a theme such as libraries and may include books about different libraries and library systems from various points in history and various parts of the world.

Cluster texts are similar to text sets which are defined as “a collection of sources of information that have a commonality; that is, they explore a shared topic, issue or big idea” (Nichols, 2009, p. 34). They differ in that cluster texts identify one text in which the other texts are centered around. The purpose of cluster texts is to provide a frame for reading other texts.
Instructional Considerations

As teachers teach in an intertextual manner, there are instructional considerations they may want to think about to enhance their instruction as well as their students’ learning. First, is the notion of the actual reading of intertextually connected texts in the classroom. It is important to decide which text should be read first. King-Shaver (2005) use the term “core text” for the text that is read first and “paired text(s)” for the texts read subsequently. To decide which text is the “core text” teachers may consider which of the texts lay the most solid foundation for the topic or theme being explored. In reading this text first, students will have more opportunities to make intertextual connections when the second text is read.
Another point of consideration might be which of the two texts students will make the most natural connections to. This book might be the book that is read first. An example of this can be found in the cluster texts previously shared centering on female pilots. The book about Amelia Earhart was the core book, or way-in text, because out of all the female pilots studied, she was the one who was most well-known. Therefore, students might be more likely to make connections to Earhart with what they already know than they might be to the others. Thus by reading this book first, students may begin making connections immediately.

**Intertextual Potential**

It is also important to consider the texts being used for instruction and their intertextual potential. Questions that may be posed follow. Is the connection between the texts one that is readily apparent to the reader or is the connection more elusive and may require the reader to think at a higher level to determine what this connection is? Are the texts connected in a way that stimulates thinking and arouses curiosity? What types of learning experiences do the texts lend to and how complex are these learning experiences?

Another consideration in determining intertextual potential is text complexity and task complexity. The Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) present text complexity in a manner that invites educators to consider both the qualitative dimensions of text complexity to include the levels of meaning, purpose and structure. Text complexity is also presented in a manner that invites educators to consider the
quantitative dimensions of text complexity to include word length and frequency as well as sentence length and text cohesion. Educators are asked to consider the reader and the tasks given to learners. Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2012) share that, “understanding the reader and the task rounds out the process for understanding text complexity” (p. 100). Through researching, “Experiencing Intertextuality Through Authentic Literature and Meaningful Writing in Middle School Content Area Classrooms,” it was found that when learners were successful with tasks complex in nature, tasks that really stretched their thinking, they were able to go back to tasks similar to those participated in previously, of lesser complexity, with ease and confidence. This was even true when the less complex task they returned to was one they had previously struggled with.

Thinking about text complexity, task complexity, as well as intertextual potential is of great value when creating learning experiences for students and creating an intertextual curriculum. Strategically placing texts and tasks of higher complexity throughout units of study to provide students the opportunity to stretch their thinking and be successful in their learning is also of great value. Considering where these complex texts and tasks are situated will greaten the chance of students being challenged but also successful.

Conclusion

According to Short, Harste, and Burke (1996), “learning is a process of searching for patterns that connect. We learn something new when we can make connections to something we already know. When there are few or no con nections, learning is difficult and easily forgotten” (p. 537). When various types of intertextually connected texts are a
part of the curriculum, students’ learning is taken to a new level, different than if books were connected in just one way and without deliberate intention. Creating learning experiences containing various types of learning may not only enhance students’ learning but guide them to learning in a memorable way that encourages meaningful learning today but also in the future.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

How Do You Feel About Learning in the Content Areas?

Respond to the following statements as honestly as you can. You will not give your name so all answers will remain anonymous.

Circle the appropriate gender: Female Male

Directions: The following statements will be read to you. After each statement is read, circle the letters that best describe how you feel about that statement. Your answers to the statement will not be graded because there are no right or wrong answers. Your genuine feelings are what is most important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. I like social studies.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. I like language arts.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. Reading social studies material interests me.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Reading language arts material interests me.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. I feel like I understand the topic being studied in social studies.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. I feel like I understand the topic being studied in language arts.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a. I feel like I can be successful in social studies.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b. I feel like I can be successful in language arts.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a. I feel like I really think during the activities in social studies class.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b. I feel like I really think during the activities in language arts class.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a. I feel like I am able to participate during social studies class.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b. I feel like I am able to participate during language arts class.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initiating Experience

First Unit of Study - Immigration
Social Studies

Think about what you have learned in social studies during the time you have been in school. At this time, how do you feel you connect to social studies?

Is there anything else you would like to share about how you feel about social studies?
### Immigration Initiating Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does the word “immigration” mean to you?</th>
<th>Now, what does the word “immigration” mean to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What questions do you have about immigration?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What inferences did you make while listening to the book?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What new questions do you have about immigration?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Think about what you have learned so far in social studies. Also, how do you feel you connect to social studies?

Is there anything else you would like to share about how you feel about social studies?
Think about what you have learned so far about immigration. Now, reread the notes you have taken. Use this to respond to the following questions.

Now, what does the word "immigration" mean to you?

What facts have you learned that make you think this?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now, what questions do you have about immigration?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What inferences have you made while learning about immigration?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is there anything else you would like to share about your learning so far? If so, please share it here:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Biographies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are you researching?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do you think your person will connect to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you know about this person that makes you think this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else do you know about this person?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who did you research?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is one person you think your person connects to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think these two people are connected? What do you know about these two people that makes you think this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else do you know about these two people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who else do you think your person connects to?</td>
<td>(OPTIONAL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think this?</td>
<td>(OPTIONAL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number __________  

Initiating Experience

**The Civil Rights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does the phrase “civil rights” mean to you?</th>
<th>Now, what does the phrase “civil rights” mean to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What questions do you have about civil rights?

What inferences did you make while listening to the book?

What new questions do you have about civil rights?
The Civil Rights

Think about what you have learned so far about the Civil Rights. Now, reread the notes you have taken. Use this, to respond to the following questions.

Now, what does the phrase “civil rights” mean to you?

What facts have you learned that make you think this?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now, what questions do you have about civil rights?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What inferences have you made while learning about civil rights?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else you would like to share about your learning so far? If so, please share it here:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now that you have created a tri-text picture book, what do you know the Civil Rights Movement?

What do you think about the Civil Rights Movement? What does "Civil Rights" mean to you?

How do you think your feelings and knowledge have changed from when we first started learning about the Civil Rights Movement?
Title of two books:

What connections can you make between the book your partner wrote and the two books you read together?

What did you think about their choice?

How did you connect your book to the other two books? What connections did you make?

Why do you think this was the best choice?
APPENDIX C

AUTHENTIC LITERATURE
### Table 28

**Authentic Literature for the First Unit of Study on Immigration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Grandfather’s Journey</em></td>
<td>Say (1999)</td>
<td>This book tells the story of Allen Say’s grandfather who left his home in Japan to explore the world. Portrayed in the book is the story of his grandfather’s love for two countries and his desire to be in both places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Ziba Came on a Boat</em></td>
<td>Lofthouse (2007)</td>
<td>Based off of actual events, this book tells the story of a young girl who travels to America with her mother thinking of all that she left behind and hoping for a new and better life in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>The Name Jar</em></td>
<td>Choi (2001)</td>
<td>Unhei is teased by the children at school about her name when her family who moves to the United States from Korea. Because of this, Unhei contemplates choosing a new, American, name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>My Name is Yoon</em></td>
<td>Recorvits (2003)</td>
<td>When Yoon moves to the United States from Korea with her family, she finds herself searching for her identity as she decides who she wants to be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 28 continued

Authentic Literature for the First Unit of Study on Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>The Matchbox Diary</em></td>
<td>Fleischman (2013)</td>
<td>A grandfather shares his memories with his granddaughter through various tokens. From an olive pit to scraps of newsprint, the record an illiterate young immigrant’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Small Beauties</em></td>
<td>Woodruff (2006)</td>
<td>Darcy is a young girl who notices the many things around her that are precious to her. When her family cannot pay their rent any longer in Ireland and move to America, Darcy will try to find a way to bring the small beauties of home to her new home in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Apple Pie 4th of July</em></td>
<td>Wong (2006)</td>
<td>An Asian-American girl is annoyed at her parents for keeping their store open on the 4th of July because she does not think that anyone will want Chinese food on this American holiday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>One Green Apple</em></td>
<td>Bunting (2006)</td>
<td>Farrah, a Muslim girl, goes on a class field trip with her traditional dupatta on her head, setting her apart from the other children. Farrah learns that some of the children seem friendly while others do not; her father had explained to her that they are not always liked here in the United States. This story is a metaphor for the benefits of intermingling people who are different as is represented by the events on the field trip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>When Jessie Came Across the Sea</em></td>
<td>Hest (2003)</td>
<td>A young girl from a poor European village is asked by a rabbi to America. She must leave her grandmother but is convinced that it is an opportunity that she must take advantage of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Good-bye, Havana! Hola, New York!</em></td>
<td>Colon (2011)</td>
<td>Five-year-old Gabriella’s parents move to the Bronx after hearing Castro’s speech about revolution. Many months later, Gabriella joins her parents but learns that New York is much different than her home in Havana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Emma’s Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty</em></td>
<td>Glaser (2010)</td>
<td>Focusing on the famous sonnet written by Emma Lazarus in 1883, “The New Colossus.” These words, engraved on a bronze plaque and mounted inside the lower level of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in 1903 greeted travelers immigrating to the United States and are the foundation of this book which illustrates her actions in helping numerous immigrants in making the long and difficult journey to the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Liberty’s Voice</em></td>
<td>Silverman (2011)</td>
<td>Beginning with her birth, this book tells the story of Emma Lazarus and how she loved to learn from the very beginning. She overcame many barriers during her time and became most known for helping immigrants travel long distance to live in the United States and for her inspiring and comforting words written in the Poem, “The New Colossus.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 29

*Authentic Literature for the Second Unit of Study on Hallmark People*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Brave Girl</em></td>
<td>Markel (2013)</td>
<td>When Clara Lemlich arrived in America, she could not speak English and did not know that poor young women had to go to work for long hours rather than pursuing an education. Clara rose above the odds and went to night school where she spent hours studying English. She never quit and fought back against women being treated poorly. She led the largest walkout of women workers in the country’s history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Who Says Women Can’t Be Doctors?</em></td>
<td>Stone (2013)</td>
<td>In the 1830s, when Elizabeth Blackwell was growing up, women were not supposed to have careers; they were supposed to be mothers and wives. Elizabeth refused to accept these beliefs and would not take no for an answer. She became the first female doctor in America through her strong-will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride</em></td>
<td>Ryan (1999)</td>
<td>Amelia Earheart and Eleanor Roosevelt make history together on a cloudless evening in 1933 when they steal away from the White House to fly an Eastern Air Transport Plane on a glorious adventure. Still dressed in their evening gowns, the two women defied tradition showing courage and a pioneering spirit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nobody Owns the Sky</td>
<td>Lindbergh (1996)</td>
<td>Bessie Coleman knew her chances of becoming a pilot in the 1920’s was slim. Not only was she female, but she was also black. However, she never let her dream die and became the first licensed African-American aviator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brave Harriet</td>
<td>Moss (2001)</td>
<td>Harriet Quimby flew across the English Channel in 1912. In an Open cockpit, all alone with only a compass to guide her, she defied the odds and became the first woman to fly solo across the English Channel, making history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sky High!</td>
<td>Moss (2009)</td>
<td>Maggie had always dreamed of flying like her favorite pilot, Amelia Earhart. However in the 1920s and 1930s, few girls became pilots. Defying the odds, Maggie became one of only two Chinese American Women Airforce Service Pilots to serve in World War II.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* table continues *
Table 29 continued

**Authentic Literature for the Second Unit of Study on Hallmark People**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Henry’s Freedom Box</em></td>
<td>Levin (2007)</td>
<td>Henry is a slave but dreams of a world where life belongs to him. When his family is sold, he risks everything and shows the conviction of a hero by mailing himself to freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Freedom Song</em></td>
<td>Walker (2012)</td>
<td>Henry “Box” Brown escaped from slavery by mailing himself to freedom. He is celebrated for being both daring and original. Music, family, and the dream of freedom is what motivated Henry and is depicted in this story as the elements of song are interwoven through the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing</em></td>
<td>Prince (2005)</td>
<td>It took fourteen years to construct the Brooklyn Bridge. Once complete, many wondered if the bridge was really safe and how much weight could it withstand. P. T. Barnum seized this opportunity to add to this memorable event in 1883.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 29 continued

**Authentic Literature for the Second Unit of Study on Hallmark People**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</em></td>
<td>Kamkwamba &amp; Mealer (2012)</td>
<td>Fourteen-year-old William Kakwamba’s village in Malawi was devastated by drought. Everyone’s crops began to fail and many began to starve. William, who spent many hours in the library, persevered to beat the odds and built a windmill out of junkyard scraps to bring electricity to his village. He became the hero who harnessed the wind and made it possible to grow food again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30

*Authentic Literature for the Third Unit of Study on the Civil Rights Movement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/S</td>
<td><em>Ruth and the Green Book</em></td>
<td>Ramsey (2010)</td>
<td>Ruth, a young girl, travels with her parents through the south to visit her grandmother. Prior to the trip, she does not know about segregation and learns quickly how blacks are often treated unfairly. She also learns about the Negro Motorist Green Book, a book full of places whereNegroes can go to eat, get gas, sleep, get their car fixed, and even get a haircut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/S</td>
<td><em>Rosa</em></td>
<td>Giovanni (2005)</td>
<td>Rosa Parks is one of America’s most famous figures for her courageous act on December 1, 1955 when she refused to give up her seat in the neutral section of the bus, a section where either white or black people could sit. Her actions sparked a revolution bringing Rosa to the center of the Civil Rights Movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/S</td>
<td><em>Back of the Bus</em></td>
<td>Reynolds (2010)</td>
<td>A mother and her son sit in the back of the bus. During the bus ride, the boy finds joy in rolling a marble on the aisle grooves of the bus. The boy tells the story of Rosa Parks who sat in the front of the bus and refused to give up her seat for a white man.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
### Table 30 continued

**Authentic Literature for the Third Unit of Study on the Civil Rights Movement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/S</td>
<td><em>This School is Not White</em></td>
<td>Rappaport (2005)</td>
<td>Schools in Drew, Mississippi were still segregated in 1965. Mae Bertha and Matthew Carter wanted their children to get the best possible education so they sent them to an all white school. Every day for five years, their children suffered humiliation and cruel treatment. However, they persevered in their fight for equality. The eight Carter children are now grown, happy, and productive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/S</td>
<td><em>Busing Brewster</em></td>
<td>Michelson (2010)</td>
<td>Brewster is excited about going to first grade until he learns that he has been selected to attend a white school. His mama tries to convince him that this school will be better than the school he usually attends because it has books in the library, art, and music. However, Brewster has a difficult time fitting in because the white children are cruel to him. Brewster meets a special person, the librarian, who gives him the gift of books and the ability to believe in himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/SR</td>
<td><em>Dad, Jackie, and Me</em></td>
<td>Uhlberg (2005)</td>
<td>During the summer of 1947, a boy and his deaf father go to watch the Brooklyn Dodgers in New York City. They are excited to see the first baseman, Jackie Robinson, play. Robinson is the first black man to play major league baseball.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Authentic Literature for the Third Unit of Study on the Civil Rights Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/SR</td>
<td>Queen of the Track</td>
<td>Lang (2012)</td>
<td>Alice Coachman was the first African American woman to win an Olympic gold medal. This book follows Coachman on her journey from rural Georgia to her triumph in the 1948 Olympic games at Wembley Stadium in London. Coachman is known for overcoming adversity of being black and being a female athlete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/SR</td>
<td>Major Taylor</td>
<td>Cline-Ransome (2004)</td>
<td>In 1891, Major Taylor landed a job at the famous Indiana bike shop Hay and Wilts, where folks were amazed that a thirteen-year-old black boy could be such a crackerjack cyclist. Through dedication, talent, and daring speed, Taylor persevered and turned pro at eighteen years of age. He battled the odds and racism to become an American Hero.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/SR</td>
<td>Coming Home</td>
<td>Mellage (1999)</td>
<td>Josh Gibson hit more home runs than Mark McGwire, Babe Ruth, or Hank Aaron. Although he was the best in the game, he was never allowed to play in the Major Leagues because of the color of his skin. He died four months before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/S</td>
<td><em>Sweet Smell of Roses</em></td>
<td>Johnson (2005)</td>
<td>There is a sweet smell in the air as two young girls leave their house secretly and quietly early in the morning to join a large group of men and women who are ready to march for justice and freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/S</td>
<td><em>We March</em></td>
<td>Evans (2012)</td>
<td>More than 250,000 people gathered in Washington D.C. to participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The march began with Dr. Martin Luther King giving his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Title of Book</td>
<td>Author (Year)</td>
<td>Brief Synopsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/R</td>
<td><em>Sit In: How Four Friends</em></td>
<td>Pinkney (2010)</td>
<td>Four young men defied the “whites only” edict of the era by taking a stand against segregation by sitting down at the Woolworth’s Department Store lunch counter. Countless others joined this Plight following Dr. Martin Luther King’s powerful words of peaceful protest. By sitting down together, the boys stood up for civil rights and created the perfect recipe for integration not only at the Woolworth’s counter but also in communities throughout the South.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/R</td>
<td><em>Freedom on the Menu</em></td>
<td>Weatherford (2005)</td>
<td>Connie knew from the sign throughout town where she could and could not go. When she sees four men take a stand for equal rights at the Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, she realizes that things may soon change. While too young to participate in the march for freedom, she helps her brother and sister make signs for Equality Now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S: Social Studies  
R: Reading  
SR: Social Studies and Reading
Table 31

*Authentic Literature for the Fourth Unit of Study on Tri-Text Creation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Balloons Over Broadway</em></td>
<td>Sweet (2011)</td>
<td>For over eighty years, gigantic balloons have risen to wobble and sway on Thanksgiving morning in New York City. Tony Sarg, a boy who loved to figure out how things moved, was the puppeteer of the Macy’s Day parade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Milly and the Macy’s Day Parade</em></td>
<td>Corey (2002)</td>
<td>Milly lives in New York City with her Polish family. Her family, and many others, miss their homeland and their traditions around the holidays. Milly talks with Mr. Macy, where her father works, and convinces him to combine old country traditions with new American heritage in a celebration that everyone can enjoy. The resulting parade, beginning in 1924, becomes a wonderful new tradition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Each Kindness</em></td>
<td>Woodson (2013)</td>
<td>Maya is a new girl at school who tries to play with Chloe and her friends on multiple occasions. Chloe’s teacher gives a lesson on how each act of kindness can change the world, and Chloe is moved by the lost opportunity for friendship because Maya has stopped coming to school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 31 continued

Authentic Literature for the Fourth Unit of Study on Tri-Text Creation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Brief Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>The Other Side</em></td>
<td>Woodson (2001)</td>
<td>Clover wonders why there is a fence separating the black side of town from the white side. Annie, a white girl, begins to sit on the fence which makes Clover even more curious as she is there both when it is raining and when it is sunny. One day, feeling brave, Clover approaches Annie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>The Dot</em></td>
<td>Reynolds (2003)</td>
<td>Vashti’s teacher’s words, “Just make a mark and see where it takes you” are an invitation for self-expression. Even though Vashti does not view herself as an artist, she proves a point by leaving a little dot which marks the beginning of her journey to surprise and self-discovery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Little Red Writing Hood</em></td>
<td>Holub (2013)</td>
<td>A brave little red pencil finds her way through numerous perils of story-telling when her teacher, Ms. 2, announces to the class that they will be writing a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Title of Book</td>
<td>Author (Year)</td>
<td>Brief Synopsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>John, Paul, George, &amp; Ben</em></td>
<td>Smith (2006)</td>
<td>John Hancock, Paul Revere, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson are five lads who were always getting into trouble for one reason or another and were not always appreciated. This tells the story before they became our founding fathers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Grandpa Green</em></td>
<td>Smith (2011)</td>
<td>Grandpa Green’s story is told through his great-grandson where memories are handed down in the shapes of topiary trees and a vivid imagination that recreates things forgotten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>The Watcher</em></td>
<td>Winter (2011)</td>
<td>Jane Goodall was a great observer of chimpanzees who spent many years researching in the African forests of Gombe, Tanzania. Beginning with her childhood in London, the author tells the story of this famous scientist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Me . . . Jane</em></td>
<td>McDonnell (2011)</td>
<td>Beginning with Jane’s childhood with Juibee, a chimpanzee, the author tells the story of Jane Goodall who observed the natural world around her with wonder, even as a child. She became a renowned humanitarian, conservationist, and animal activist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

INTERTEXTUAL GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS
H-Map
INTERLOCKING RECTANGLES
## Category Map for Paired Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Category #1</th>
<th>Category #2</th>
<th>Category #3</th>
<th>Category #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

CULMINATING ACTIVITY GUIDELINES
**Immigration Poster**

This learning experience is to give you the opportunity to show what you have learned throughout our study on Immigration. You may and should reflect and revisit the various books in the room as you create your poster. You will use the pairs of books, as well as the other books available, to create your poster.

First, you should complete a rough draft of your poster. To create your rough draft, please do the following:

- Fold your rough draft paper so there are four quadrants.
- Write four big ideas that you learned in the immigration unit. Write one big idea at the top of each of the four quadrants. Next, explain your thinking by citing textual evidence from the books you have read. (12)
- Draw a symbol in each of the four quadrants to represent the big idea. (8)
- On a separate sheet of paper, you should write a reflective paragraph that explains your poster and brings all four of the big ideas together. (3)

Once you have successfully completed the rough draft of your poster, you will be given poster paper to publish your poster. While doing this, you will want to make sure that your poster is neat and attractive (2).

You will be required to submit your rough draft with your poster. (5)

I am looking forward to seeing your thinking!
Number ________  Biographical Poem Guidelines and Organizer

Directions: Using your picture book and the author’s note, answer the following questions. You will want to make sure you are accurate and detailed in your responses.

What is the time period? ______________________________________________________

What are two personality traits that describe your character?

______________________________________         __________________________________________

What makes you think this?

______________________________________________________________________

What is your person’s most important accomplishment?

______________________________________

What other accomplishments did your person have?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

What is an inference you can make?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

What are two physical traits of your character?

______________________________________

Directions: Next, use your research to write a poem. The goal of this poem is for your reader to be able to create an image in their head while reading.

First Name of Person
personality trait and personality trait
verb ending in ing, verb ending in ing, verb ending in ing
noun, noun, noun, noun, noun,
action verb, action verb, action verb
physical trait, physical trait,
Last Name of Person
Directions: Now, write an informational paragraph and include the following:

- Your person's name
- The time period
- What they are most known for
- Something you want your audience to remember about your person

You will need to write in complete sentences using capital letters at the beginning of your sentences and correct punctuation.

Directions: Once you are ready to publish, you will use the diamante template provided for you to write your poem. You will write your final informational paragraph on an index card. Both of these will be glued into a large foldable. Finally, you will draw a picture on the front of your published work to represent your writing.
Civil Rights Poster

This learning experience is to give you the opportunity to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement. After participating in a “Browse and Pass” and selecting your paired text, you will read your books, document your thinking in your Listening Log, and use this information and thinking to create a Civil Rights Poster. Using your Listening Log, you will first create a category map.

You should collaborate with your partner throughout this experience so you can make decisions together. Once you are ready, you should create a rough draft for your poster. You will want to be sure to include the following:

- The name of both of your books (1)
- Two categories that you think are the most important (2)
- Two facts for each of these categories (4)
- Something you want people to remember (1)
- Something that surprised you (1)
- A conclusion you can draw or inference you can make (2)
- A picture/symbol that fits and represents your poster (2)

You will want to make sure that your poster is neat, attractive, and colorful (2).

You need to include a completed category map with your poster. This should be created prior to beginning your poster but needs to be submitted with your final product. (5).

The total points available for this learning experience are 20 points.
Writing a Picture Book

You have learned quite a bit about the Civil Rights Movement. This is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned about the Civil Rights Movement and also what you have learned about making intertextual connections. To do this, you will write your own picture book.

A research grid, backwards story map, and “making your thinking visible sheet” will be given to you to guide you through this process. These documents will need to be turned in with your finish product.

In addition, daily mini-lessons will be taught to give you the opportunity to consider a variety of aspects for your composition. You will need to meet the following requirements while composing your book.

Focus

- Your picture book should be focused on a particular theme or subject.
- The focus of the picture book should clearly be connected with the two books read and researched for the “Share Fair.”
- Your picture book should be narrative in style with the integration of the facts in a manner that enhances rather than detracts from the story line.

Style

- Your picture book should capture your reader’s attention and be engaging. In other words, it should be a “real page turner.”
- Your picture book should use carefully chosen words.
- Your picture book should contain various lengths of sentences, beginning with a variety of words.

Content

- Your picture will have at least five to ten facts on the Civil Rights integrated into your narrative story line.
- The facts integrated should enhance the story rather than detract from it.
- There should be a clear connection between your book and the two books you created your “Share Fair” poster on.

**Organization**

- Your story needs to be told in a logical and engaging manner.
- Your story should flow in a way that is easy to understand.
- There should be a close relationship between your pictures and your text. The two should form a partnership. Your pictures should make sense and illustrate your thoughtful contemplation of the form they will take.

**Conventions**

- Your book should be written in complete sentences with the correct punctuation used.
- Paragraphs should be formed to represent ideas.
- The correct spelling and capitalization should be used.

As discussed previously, you will need to complete several items before you can publish your finished product. Your teachers will meet with you throughout the process to guide you.

Once all of the requirements are met, you will publish your own picture book and then participate in an analysis. These will need to be turned in by the due date to be considered complete.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fact</th>
<th>Source #1</th>
<th>Source #2</th>
<th>Source #3</th>
<th>Source #4</th>
<th>My Own Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact #1</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fact #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fact #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fact #4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fact #5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My beginning ideas of how these will fit into my story:

Source #1: ________________________________________________________________

Source #2: ________________________________________________________________

Source #3: ________________________________________________________________

Source #4: ________________________________________________________________

Source #5: ________________________________________________________________
Making Your Thinking Visible

**What** is the category/theme that you will connect to from your two books?

**How** will your story line connect to this theme?

Will your story line be similar or different? Will you create complimentary, conflicting, synoptic texts? Place a checkmark next to the type of pairing you will use.

_____ Complimentary – connected by a central topic or theme
_____ Conflicting – alternating perspectives on a central topic
_____ Synoptic – variation of a single story

Why do you think this is the best choice?

*Use the story map on the other side to create a backwards story map. *Put stars where you will integrate your five facts. Make sure you number these.
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Sample Interview Questions

First Unit of Study: Immigration

- I would like you to think about our unit of study on immigration and the paired texts we used for learning. What did you think about it?
- Can you talk about what you thought about how I used two books that were connected to teach you about immigration?
- At this time, thinking about that unit, if I asked you if you liked social studies, what would you say? Why would you say that?
- Thinking about your poster and the book you made, what do you think about what you have done so far?
- Out of everything we did during the Immigration unit, what are your most proud of?
- Before we started this year, did you think picture books were more for little kids? What do you think now?
- What was difficult for you?
- What helped you?
- What did you think about using picture books in this unit?
Second Unit of Study: Hallmark People

- I would like you to think about our Hallmark People unit. Out of all the pairs of books we read, which was your favorite? Which did you like the most? Why?
- Out of all of the activities and learning experiences in our Hallmark People unit, which did you like the best?
- What was the most difficult out of everything?
- What activity was the easiest for you?
- I want to talk to you for a few minutes about the two units we have completed. We did this whole Hallmark People unit and before we learned through another unit on Immigration. Which of these units did you enjoy more? Why?
- Out of the Immigration unit, were there a pair of texts that you thought were difficult to understand or to decide what the main idea was?

Third Unit of Study: Civil Rights Movement

- One of the reasons I wanted to talk with you is because I have been looking at everything you have been doing from the very beginning of the school year. So, think about our first unit, it was all about immigration. Our second unit was all about special people, I call them Hallmark People. Now we are learning about the Civil Rights Unit. What I am wondering is how you feel about your learning in all of those units. Which of the units did you feel the most successful in?
- Out of all of the units we studied so far, is there one that you liked the most?
Now, let’s think about the different activities we have participated in for our learning during the Civil Rights unit. In this unit, we created TABB books, we made a Category Map, you wrote a paragraph, you wrote a newspaper article, and you created a poster. What did you like the best out of all of these?

Now, let’s talk about the actual books that we used for our learning. Think about all of the pairs of text we read. Which do you think which were you the most successful at making connections, drawing conclusions, and making inferences and the other things I asked you to do?

Out of all of these books, which did you find the most difficult to make connections between?

Which of these books was easiest for you; which books did you not have to think as hard?

How do you feel about your poster?

Fourth Unit of Study: Tri-Text Picture Book Creation

Let’s talk about your picture book, your finished book that you wrote yourself. What are your thoughts about your book?

Now, let’s talk about your journal. . . .

During our final unit, I read you some books to show you how you might connect your book to a pair of texts. I read you these two books to show you how you might write a story that is connected by theme. I read these two books to show you how you can write a book that is connected by topic. I read these two books
because I had a message for you. The message was to use your imagination and to get started. Then I read these two books to teach you about writing with voice. Finally, I read these two books to teach you about different ways you can publish. Were there any of these books that helped in your writing?

- Do you think it was easier to learn I read two books to you, or do you think it would have been easier if I read one book?

- Now let’s talk about what we have done since the beginning of the year. We started with the Immigration Unit, and you made a poster. Then we learned through a Hallmark Person unit, and you composed and published a poem. Remember, you wrote a diamante poem, and we created a step book in that unit. Then we learned through a Civil Rights unit, and we made the poster for the Share Fair, and then we learned in the Tri-Text picture book unit. Was there one unit of study that stood out to you? What stood out to you about these different units?
APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: Experiencing Intertextuality through the Authentic Literature and Meaningful Writing in the Middle School Content Area Classroom

Principal Investigator: Ms. Lisa Ciecierski
You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information about the research project, the requirements, and the associated risks and benefits of the study. Your participation in the research is voluntary. Please note that participation in the study will have no effect on your grade. Please read the consent form carefully, and ask any questions prior to your decision to participate in the research. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to explore making connections using picture books, novels, and trade books and writing in the subject areas of reading, writing, social studies, math, and science.

I am particularly interested in researching:

1) What happens when students learn content area material and experience intertextuality through authentic literature and meaningful writing?
2) How do students grow in the area of literacy when they experience intertextuality through the use authentic literature and writing?
3) How are students’ perceptions towards reading and writing influenced when they experience intertextuality through the use authentic literature and writing in the content areas?

Procedures
If you chose to participate in this research, you will submit samples your work and questionnaire responses. Observations will occur throughout the study. Observations of the participants’ gestures, social interactions, and the physical environment of the classroom will be noted in the researcher's journal. You may also be asked to participate in audio-recorded interviews throughout the study. Each interview will last approximately five to fifteen minutes.
Audio-Recordings
Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You may choose to receive a copy of the recording and transcription.

Benefits
This study will enable the principal researcher to learn about the perceived impact of exploring making connections with authentic literature and writing in the content area classroom.

Risks and Discomforts
There are not any risks or discomforts from participating in this study. There will not be any rewards for participating nor will there be any negative consequences for not participating.

Privacy and Confidentiality
Your confidentiality will be protected through the use of pseudonyms in all written products of the research. Audio-recordings will not be made available to anyone. The recordings and transcriptions will remain in a locked cabinet in the office of Dr. William Bintz, the dissertation director of the principal investigator, at Kent State University.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or may discontinue your participation in the study at any time. You will also be informed of any additional information which may affect your willingness to participate in the study.

Contact Information
If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact Ms. Lisa Ciecierski at (814) 866-5878 or lciecier@kent.edu. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research, please contact the IRB at 330-672-2704.

Consent Statement and Signature
I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have questions answered satisfactorily regarding this study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of the consent form will be provided to me for future reference.

Child’s Name (please print) ________________________________

Please check one:

_____ I AGREE to my child’s participation in the study.

_____ I do not agree to my child’s participation in the study.

_____________________________ __________________________
Parent’s Signature Date
APPENDIX H

AUDIO CONSENT FORM
Audio-Recording Consent

I agree to be audio-recorded for the research project described above. The researcher may use the audio-recordings for the research and any report or publications that are produced from the research.

I have been told that I have the right to a copy of the audio-recording before it is used. I have decided that:

__________ I do want a copy of the recording.

Please send the recording via: (check one)

_____ e-mail ________________________________
     e-mail address

_____ U.S. mail ________________________________
     street address
     ________________________________
     city, state, zip

__________ I do not want a copy of the recording.

__________________________________________
Participant’s Signature                          Date
APPENDIX I

INFORMED ASSENT DOCUMENT
APPENDIX I

Assent Form

EXPERIENCING INTERTEXTUALITY
THROUGH AUTHENTIC LITERATURE AND MEANINGFUL WRITING
IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CONTENT AREA CLASSROOM

Procedure for obtaining assent from children
1. Hi, [child's name].
2. My name is Mrs. Ciecierski, and I am trying to learn more about how students make connections in the content areas.
3. I would like you to answer some questions about your learning. During [Description of what you would like the child to do; include video/audio taping if appropriate. Try to avoid using words like "help" and "cooperate" which might suggest coercion].
4. Do you want to do this? [If the child does not indicate affirmative agreement, you cannot continue with this child].
5. Do you have any questions before we start? [Clarify if necessary].
6. If you want to stop at any time just tell me.

A witness statement can be added if the extra protection provided by it is desired.
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REFERENCES


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